Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

Building Transitions to Good Jobs for Low-Income Women:

Summary and Recommendations

The report was prepared for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women on the recommendation of its Round Table on Women's Economic Security. It focuses on transition-to-employment strategies and best practices that would enable women in Nova Scotia to move out of poverty into more stable, well-paid employment.

Through an assessment of best practices and other research, the report finds that one of the most generally recognized strategies for helping women with barriers to employment is a long-term process of educational upgrading and skills training and that programming that is woman centred and delivered by community-based organizations programs can play an important role in any transition-to-employment program mix.

The report discusses three central and related issues that arise from these findings: how can community-based transition-to-employment programming play a role in the program mix in Nova Scotia; is there an opportunity, through current government policies and programs, to develop a province-wide community-based training infrastructure for women in the province; and what kind of programs should be offered in Nova Scotia.

Recommendations are offered at the end of the report to guide the development of a transition-to-employment strategy for low-income women in Nova Scotia.

Women, Poverty, and Precarious Employment

Low income is a fact of life for many women living in Nova Scotia. Women in full-time employment in 2001 earned an average weekly wage of $523 before taxes[1]; gross annual wages at this rate would be $27,196. For many women the economic reality is far worse. In 2002, 69,200 (or 37 per cent of all women workers in Nova Scotia) earned less than $10 an hour. A woman working full time, full year at $10 an hour would earn only $17,500 a year. As a point of comparison, the low-income cutoff in 2000 for a family of two was $18,200. For a family of three, it was 22,600.[2]

Although many low-paid workers are employed full time, an increasing number work in precarious jobs—temporary, part-time, casual, or other non-standard forms of employment that are characterized by low wages and few benefits. Women are over-represented in both non-standard work and in precarious, low-paid employment: 69 per cent of adult workers in Canada earning less than $8 per hour in 2000 were women. Although women accounted for 46 per cent of the labour force in 2001, they constituted 63 per cent of those in precarious jobs.[3] Many of those in low-paying jobs are unable to move up, and those who are trapped tend to be female and to have high school education or less.

Changes to federal Employment Insurance regulations in 1996 have made many of these workers ineligible for employment insurance and benefits such as parental leave. Their employment usually does not include non-statutory employment benefits such as health insurance, paid sick leave, and pensions; it seldom leads to career progression; and provides limited on-the-job training.

Low levels of education, combined with lone parenting or a disability, greatly enhance a woman's probability of being poor or on income assistance. Department of Community Services data show that over half of single mothers requiring social assistance have less than a grade 12 education.

Grade 12 education may not be enough to ensure a living wage; jobs in the knowledge-based economy require more than basic literacy and math skills. However, opportunities

for skills upgrading and for lifelong learning, whereby workers have the opportunity to upgrade their education and skills are not widely available for low-income people. New strategies and supports are needed to help women move from precarious, low-waged employment or social assistance into stable, well-paid, and secure jobs.

The Changing Policy Landscape and Its Implications for Women's Access to Training

The economic situation of low-income women has been affected by restructuring and changes to social policies and programs in the 1990s, including the loss of designated status for women in government-funded programs. These changes, and especially those associated with the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, have translated into disproportionate losses for women's access to skills-development, training, and employment programming. Fewer women are qualifying for EI and therefore for benefits under Part II of the EI Act such as wage subsidies and skills-development programming. The biggest barrier to women's ability to access transition-to-employment programming that encourages long-term self-sufficiency, therefore, lies in the lack of government funding for skills development and training.

Funding cuts and program restructuring have also had a negative impact on community-based organizations that previously provided transitional training or support to women seeking employment. Core financial support and direct purchasing ended, and organizations have had to rely on short-term project funding.

Currently, the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement and new priorities under the Skills and Learning Framework offer a new opportunity to help some low-income women to move into more stable employment through the funding of transitional programming. One of the framework's guiding principles, that programming be inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians, including "women and persons with low income," has already translated into limited direct investment in transitional programming for low-income women.

A coordinated approach to employability exists, but still missing under the Skills and Learning Framework are new funding mechanisms and firm financial commitments to the priorities on the part of all federal and provincial partners in the framework. An overall strategic approach to developing province-wide transition-to-employment programs that takes into consideration the diverse and complex needs of women on low income has also not yet been developed.

A major constraint on the effectiveness of the framework's priorities is the lack of specific financial commitments by the federal government in its innovation strategy for the knowledge-based economy, *Knowledge Matters*, to realistically assist low-income people, including women, to access skills-development training.

Transition-to-Employment Strategies: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

The literature shows that best practices do exist for helping people to move from social assistance or reliance on low-income jobs to stable well-paid employment, but there is no "quick fix" to the problem of low-waged work. Almost all successful approaches require time (two to three years' minimum for many individuals) and a mix of interventions.

It is generally accepted that childcare costs, health benefits, and transportation must be covered before single mothers can be expected to make the move from assistance to employment. Without these supports, no employment strategy will work. This means coverage for both the transitional period (up to two years) and at least the first year in a job.

Academic upgrading is also key to any strategy for moving people into well-paid work. Job-development and training programs that combine formal learning with skills development and on-the-job experience have been found to be effective in helping recent labour force entrants and re-entrants encountering employment difficulties move into the mainstream economy.

Job-training programs alone have been less successful in assisting single parents on social assistance to move into stable employment. In part, this is because programs did not adequately take into account the multiple barriers

that single mothers face, such as access to child care, transportation, and health benefits. It is also because women have usually been trained for jobs that do not pay a living family wage.

Transition programs, common in the 1980s and early 1990s, typically helped women to overcome educational, attitudinal, and structural barriers; determine and realize their job aspirations; and acquire the basic skills needed to participate in the labour force or to go on to further education or training. They were delivered by community-based non-profit organizations and by small private businesses.

The literature shows that transition programs that are woman-centred, socially and culturally inclusive, and delivered at the community level by community-based organizations are most effective for assisting low-income women with multiple barriers to employment to move along a continuum towards more stable employment. This includes women with a background of abuse, women with disabilities, aboriginal women, women from visible minorities, low-income women, and women wanting to re-enter the workforce after some time at home raising children.

Providing training for women in areas suffering a shortage of qualified workers would also help to reverse the trend of women being relegated to low-wage service and clerical employment. There are numerous examples, nationally and internationally, of successful bridging, or pre-employment, programs for women interested in exploring careers in the trades or technological occupations. Many of these programs are also used in conjunction with re-entry or pre-employment programming designed specifically for women.

Strengthening community economic development (CED) has also proven to be a viable strategy for creating jobs and moving low-income people into more stable, better-paid employment. A CED approach specifically designed for women can offer a job creation focus and transitional programming that is of real benefit to women and the community.

Strategies to Improve Living Standards

Employment alone may not be a way out of poverty. Longer-term transition-to-employment programs and other interventions are required to ensure that women do not remain in poverty or on the periphery of the labour market.

Options for improving living standards in both the short and the long term include wage supplements (alone or in combination with healthcare and childcare benefits and full-time employment) and income packaging (a mix of social assistance including child care and other benefits and part-time work). Other options that go one step further include a guaranteed annual income and a negative income tax.

Income supplementation in the form of tax credits and child benefits is currently being used to address child poverty. None of these measures, however, address the underlying problem of low-waged work. Europe has recognized that breaking through the low-wage barrier takes more than income supplementation schemes. The European approach is to implement economic and social policies that encourage better-paying jobs and support families through tax-supported child care.

Some strategies Canada could consider along this line include larger investments in education and training, higher minimum wages and better labour standards, income security alternatives to welfare, investments in health benefits such as Pharmacare, as well as a real commitment to child care.

The Case for Community-based Transitional Programs for Women in Nova Scotia

Transition-to-employment programs for low-income women and women with multiple barriers to employment must address the issues of low expectations and lack of self-confidence. The most effective programs have been shown to be those that are built on women-centred and adult education principles, are flexible and multi-dimensional, and have sequential learning components with multiple points of entry. They include a mix of programming, similar to building blocks, which women can use to upgrade their education and build their skills. Such programs are most effective when they are developed and delivered in the community by women's organizations, and take women's living conditions into account.

Recommended transitional programming components for women in Nova Scotia include educational upgrading; pre-employment training; mentoring, support, and orientation to trades and technology training; and training in community economic development skills. These programming types fit the goals of the Nova Scotia Skills Agenda and many of the approaches are already recommended under the Skills and Learning Framework.

Some low-income women still find it difficult to access educational upgrading because of lack of confidence, distance, travel time, or affordable transportation. Educational upgrading programs and post-secondary preparatory training offered in the local community through community-based organizations would help to fill the gaps in the community college and Adult High School programs and alleviate accessibility problems for those living in more isolated regions of the province.

A basic, though fragile, community-based infrastructure for the delivery of transition-to-employment and CED programming for low-income women already exists in Nova Scotia. These programs and the organizational infrastructure to deliver them deserve to be better supported through more sustainable funding. This infrastructure and capacity should be developed and built upon so that a variety of programs are available to women living throughout Nova Scotia.

There is also some organizational capacity to mentor and support women to participate in community college trades and technology programs, but if a full-fledged community-based orientation to trades and technology program is to be developed, it will be necessary to develop more capacity to deliver such a program at the community level.

Conclusions

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework, with social inclusion as one of its goals, offers a better mechanism for coordination, planning, and support of community-based transitional programs than in the past. Improved funding mechanisms (including longer-term, multi-year, and program-based funding) with accountability reporting more appropriate for voluntary sector organizations, however, should be developed.

All government partners in the framework should also make firmer financial commitments to the employability and career development priority. The framework's business plan and the business plans of government partners in the framework should include accountability reporting for the framework's priorities and goals, including the goal of addressing the transition-to-employment needs of low-income women.

Other constraints on the ability of the framework to fulfil the goal of social inclusion must also be addressed. A more effective longer-term strategy probably means moving beyond the Skills and Learning Framework as it stands. This would likely involve developing a renewed and strengthened LMDA with expanded partnership arrangements, focusing more on social inclusion goals, enhancing federal government financial support for skills development (outside of its current limited obligations under Part II the EI Act), and changing existing EI legislation and regulations to ensure more women are eligible for benefits and programs.

Recommendations

Partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework

- That community-based transition-to-employment programs be recognized by both levels of government and all departmental partners involved in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework as an appropriate strategy for supporting low-income women in their move into employment.
- That giving due consideration to costs and the fiscal capacity of the province, the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework establish a task group to develop next steps for the development of transition-to-employment programs for low-income women in the Province of Nova Scotia, consistent with the findings of this report, namely that:
  - More stable funding mechanisms are required for community-based organizations currently delivering transitional programs; and funding should extend beyond the present 12-month timeframe so that program delivery may be more efficient and effective and offer a more diverse range of training for low-income women.
  - Transition to employment for women with multiple barriers to employment can be a long-term process and requires program flexibility to enable women to move from one stage of learning to another.
  - Transition-to-employment programs work best when they include various components and approaches specifically designed for low-income women and when they are flexible in design and content and can be tailored to individual needs.
  - Transition-to-employment programs in Nova Scotia should incorporate various components such as prior learning assessment and recognition, educational upgrading (including post-secondary readiness components), pre-employment programming, community economic development programming, and transition-to-trades-and-technology programming.
  - Prior learning mechanisms and processes should be recognized and developed so women can transfer within and between community-based learning and other transition-to-employment programs, and between these and the various programs offered through post-secondary institutions.
  - Provision for appropriate support, especially child care, elder and disability care, and transportation costs, should be in place for the duration of all transition-to-employment training programs.
  - The specific needs of rural women should be taken into account in relation to access to educational upgrading and other transition-to-employment programs, as well as their particular transportation and caregiving needs and costs.
  - Existing community-based women's organizations with a successful record of delivering transition-to-employment programming to low-income women should be considered as a basis for the development of a community-based infrastructure to deliver transitional programs to women across the province.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- That in collaboration with the various partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework and the Round Table for Women's Economic Security, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women continue to provide advice and support for the development and implementation of a strategy to develop community-based transition-to-employment programs for low-income women throughout the province.

Federal and Provincial Governments

- That the federal government review and revise the Employment Insurance Act and regulations to ensure that more women are eligible for benefits and programs.
- That the federal and Nova Scotia governments consider expanding their partnership arrangements under the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Skills and Learning Framework to allow greater flexibility for the development of a jointly funded Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling program in Nova Scotia so that these services can be developed province-wide and in a socially inclusive manner.

- That in the context of a renewed and strengthened LMDA, the federal government consider enhancing its financial support for skills development (outside of its obligations under Part II the EI Act) so that transition-to-employment programs can be expanded to people in poverty (including women) who are not currently eligible for, or in receipt of, social assistance or EI (sometimes referred to as "gap" clients).
- That both levels of government consider policies that would allow better access for low-income women, including women on social assistance, to post-secondary education.
- That both levels of government consider the need for stable, affordable, and accessible childcare services and focus on the enhancement of these services under the federal government's Early Childhood Development Initiative.

Governments, Business, Labour, Education, and Community Organizations

- That all levels of government, educational institutions, business and labour organizations, and community organizations recognize that everyone has a stake in assisting women to move towards economic independence and that they continue to work together to identify solutions to poverty. These should include ways to improve the quality of jobs in the labour market, better income security programs, accessible and affordable child care, workplace accommodation, improved supports for persons with disabilities, and better access to post-secondary education and continuing learning programs to assist people to participate in the labour market.

References

1 Ronald Colman, Social Determinants of Women's Health in Atlantic Canada, vol. 1 of Women's Health in Atlantic Canada, January 2003 Update (Halifax: GPI Atlantic, 2003), 16. Ronald Colman, Social Determinants of Women's Health in Atlantic Canada, vol. 1 of Women's Health in Atlantic Canada, January 2003 Update (Halifax: GPI Atlantic, 2003), 16.

2 Ibid., 3.

3 Cynthia Cranford, Leah Vosko, and Nancy Zukewich, "Precarious Employment in the Canadian Labour Market: A Statistical Portrait," *Just Labour* 3 (Fall 2003): 6–22.

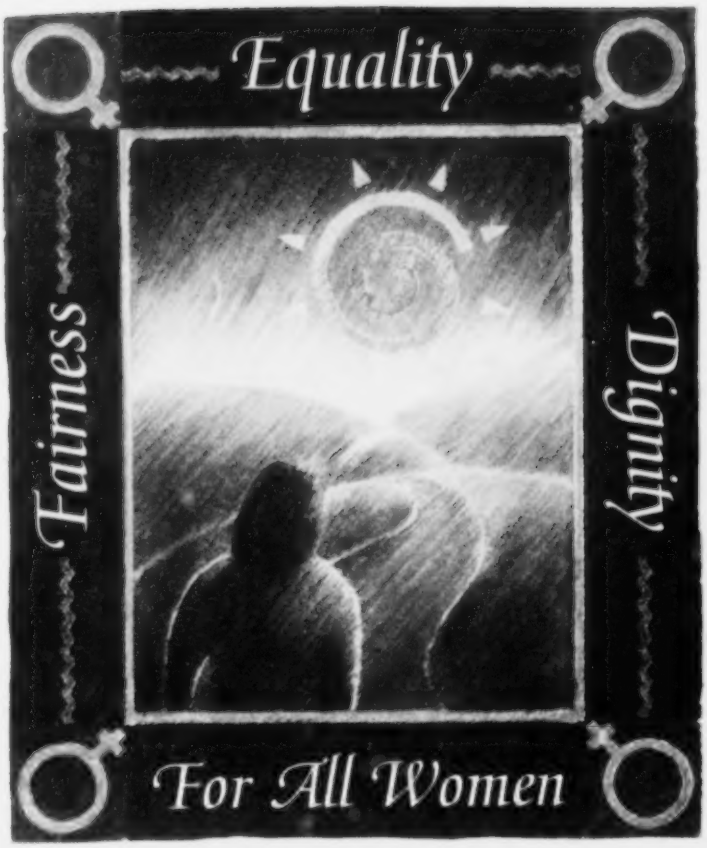
The full report, *Building Transitions to Good Jobs*, by Stella Lord and Anne Martell, can be downloaded from the Nova Scotia Advisory Council website: www.gov.ns.ca/staw

Nova Scotia
Advisory Council on
The Status of Women

Conseil consultatif sur la
condition féminine de la
Nouvelle-Écosse

An agency of the Province of Nova Scotia

Building Transitions to Good Jobs
for Low-Income Women



The Journey Continues ...

Printed on papers that
contain recycled fibre

Building Transitions to Good Jobs for Low-Income Women

May, 2004

Stella Lord
Policy & Research
NSAC Status of Women

Anne Martell
Martell Consulting Services Ltd.

Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women
PO Box 745
Halifax NS B3J 2T3

902.424.8662
1.800.565.8662

Table of Contents

Preface iv

Executive Summary v

Key Findings

Recommendations

1. **Women, Poverty, and Precarious Employment** 1

Women in Precarious Employment 1

Women, Poverty, and Income Assistance 3

The Relevance of Education and Skills Development 3

Summary of Key Points 6

2. **The Changing Policy Landscape and Its Implications for Women's Access to Training** 7

The Restructuring of Government Programs and Women's Access to Training 7

Implications of Program Restructuring for Women 9

Impact of Program Restructuring on Community-Based Program Delivery 10

Transition-to-Employment Programs and the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework 11

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework: New Opportunities for Low-Income Women? 13

Limitations of the Skills and Learning Framework 15

Summary of Key Points 17

3. **Transition-to-Employment Strategies: Best Practices and Lessons Learned** 19

Key Services and Supports Essential 20

Strategies to Build Human Capital 20

Access to Educational Upgrading and Post-Secondary Education 21

Job Training Programs 23

Longer-term Re-entry or Transitional Programs for Women 26

Design Considerations for Transition-to-Employment Programs 27

Bridging to Trades and Technology Programs 28

Community Economic Development (CED) Programs 30

CED Designed for Women 31

Summary of Key Points 33

4.	**Strategies to Improve Living Standards**	35
	Strategies to "Make Work Pay"	35
	Earning Supplementation Schemes	35
	Income Packaging and Social Assistance Programs	37
	Income Supplementation Schemes	37
	Strategies to Transform Low-Paid Work	38
	Summary of Key Points	39
5.	**The Case for Community-based Transitional Programs for Women in Nova Scotia**	40
	A Strategy for Establishing Community-based Transitional Programs for Women in Nova Scotia	41
	A Mix of Transitional Programming	41
	Educational Upgrading	42
	Pre-employment/Re-entry Programs	42
	Bridging Programs to Enter Trades and Technology Training	43
	Transitional Programming and Community Economic Development	44
	Building and Supporting Capacity	45
	Strengthening Support for Community-based Transitional Programming	46
	Summary of Key Points	48
6.	**Recommendations**	50
	Endnotes	53

Preface

This report is about low-income women in Nova Scotia and their options for moving out of poverty. It was prepared for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women on the recommendation of its Round Table on Women's Economic Security. The report focuses on what kind of transition-to-employment strategies and best practices would provide a better foundation to enable women in Nova Scotia to move out of poverty into more stable, well-paid employment.

Arising from an assessment of best practices and other research, the report finds that one of the most generally recognized strategies for women with barriers to employment is a long-term process of educational upgrading and skills training and that programming that is woman centred and delivered by community-based organizations programs can play an important role in any transition-to-employment program mix. The report discusses three central and related issues that arise from these findings: how can community-based transition-to-employment programming play a role in the program mix in Nova Scotia; is there an opportunity, through current government policies and programs, to develop a province-wide community-based training infrastructure for women in the province; and what kind of programs should be offered in Nova Scotia.

During the 1980s and 1990s, transition programs for women were fairly common in Canada. Established to help women enter or re-enter the labour force through skills-based training, they were designed to assist women to overcome educational, attitudinal, and structural barriers, as well as to determine and realize their job aspirations. A national evaluation of the Job Entry Program for the former Employment and Immigration Canada recorded the success of these programs. It found that the Re-entry option was particularly effective for women in the Atlantic region in terms of both employment and earnings.

But what happened to these programs? In examining this question, the report explores the key changes in government policies that have had an impact on the job-training delivery landscape from the late 1980s up to the present and introduces the reader to the economic realities faced by many women in Nova Scotia today.

The report goes on to examine a variety of approaches and best practices that enable low-income women to move into more stable and better-paid employment. It also looks at current policies and programs and in particular the opportunities the new Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework offers to develop meaningful community-based training programs that can address women's needs. A series of recommendations on this question and how the Skills and Learning Framework could meet the educational and training needs of women—including recommendations on infrastructure, delivery and sustainability—completes the report.

Building Transitions to Good Jobs for Low Income Women: Executive Summary

The report was prepared for the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women on the recommendation of its Round Table on Women's Economic Security.

It demonstrates that despite the recent efforts of governments to address child poverty, women in Nova Scotia (especially lone mothers and women with disabilities) continue to be highly vulnerable to poverty, either through reliance on social assistance or because they work in precarious, low-paid employment.

The report presents a strategy to assist low-income women in Nova Scotia to make a transition to more stable and better-paid employment.

Based on a review of best practices in transition-to-employment programs in Canada and elsewhere, the report makes the case that various types of community-based transitional programming can play a key role in any mix of programs designed to enhance the employability and earning power of low-income women.

Community-based transition-to-employment programs did exist in the 1980s and early 1990s. However, the withdrawal of federal funding, changes in government income security policies, and funding challenges faced by the voluntary sector since 1996 have limited access to these programs. These changes diminished the ability of women's and community-based organizations to deliver the kind of programs that have been demonstrated to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of low-income women.

The report finds, however, that though the funding base is somewhat fragile, an infrastructure of women's organizations with innovative ideas and the knowledge and skills to develop and deliver various kinds of transitional programming for low-income women, continues to exist in Nova Scotia.

Through an examination of recent government policies and programs, the report also makes the case that though there may be funding and other limitations, the recently developed Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework presents a new opportunity to strengthen, rebuild, and develop community-based capacity to organize and deliver various types of transitional programming designed for low-income women in Nova Scotia.

Key Findings

The report's key findings are based on a review of best practices, program evaluations, and adult education literature and on interviews with those involved in the development and delivery of relevant government and community-based programs.

Low Income Is a Fact of Life for Many Women in Nova Scotia

Low income is a fact of life for many women living in Nova Scotia.

More jobs in today's labour market are part time, short term, or in precarious employment. Many of these jobs (estimated at one out of four) no longer provide a family wage. A high preponderance of these jobs are filled by women. The shift to various forms of non-standard employment is now a permanent feature of the Canadian labour market. Many women employed in low-wage jobs, as well as women on income assistance, live on incomes well below the low-income cutoff.

Opportunities to improve the economic situation of low-income women have been affected by policy changes in the 1990s that resulted in a restructuring of social programs; the loss of designated status for women in government-funded programs; and funding cuts to community-based organizations. Fewer women now qualify for Employment Insurance, and this also affects their access to skills development programs under Part II of the EI Act.

The Department of Community Services, as a prevention measure, makes some transitional programming available to so-called "gap" clients, but there is little transition-to-employment programming available to low-income women who are not eligible for either social assistance or for Employment Insurance.

No Quick Fix for Moving People from Welfare to Stable, Well-Paid Employment

A review of the literature concludes that while best practices exist for enabling women to move along a continuum from social assistance or reliance on low-incomes to stable well-paid employment, almost all successful approaches require time (two to three years for some) and a mix of interventions.

The literature also confirms that before single mothers can move from assistance to employment, policies are required to cover childcare costs, health benefits, and transportation for both the transitional period (of one to two years) and at least the first year in a job.

Other factors identified in the literature as essential to acquiring well-paid work include grade 12 equivalency and access to post-secondary education.

Transitional Programs Are Effective in Moving Women out of Poverty

One of the most generally recognized strategies for moving women out of poverty is a long-term process of educational upgrading and skills training, often provided through women-centred programming. During the 1980s and 1990s, transition programs for women were fairly common in Canada. Established initially to help women enter skill-based training or re-enter the labour force, they were designed to assist women to overcome educational, attitudinal, and structural barriers, as well as to determine and realize their job potential and aspirations.

The literature shows that the most effective transitional programs for women are those that integrate pre-employment programming with skill training, counselling, mentoring, and life skills; are specifically designed for women (that is, take their life circumstances into account); and are developed and delivered by women's organizations.

Transitional programs have been found to be especially effective for women experiencing multiple barriers to employment, including women with a background of abuse, women with disabilities, aboriginal women, women from visible minorities, low-income women wanting to leave social assistance, and women wanting to re-enter the workforce after some time at home raising children. Transitional or bridging programs are also effective for women interested in careers in the trades or technological occupations.

Various Types of Transitional Programming Options Are Appropriate for Women in Nova Scotia

The research and current capacity in Nova Scotia suggests that community-based transitional programming options could be developed to include educational upgrading; pre-employment/re-entry training; orientation to trades and technology training with mentoring and ongoing support; and training in community economic development (CED) skills.

A Basic Infrastructure to Deliver Transitional Programs for Women Already Exists in Nova Scotia

A number of women's organizations are already in place throughout the province with the dedication, knowledge, and skills to develop and deliver various kinds of transitional programming designed for low-income women. In order to build on this infrastructure and to begin to develop a province-wide system of transitional programming, a well-coordinated effort, supported by more stable funding, is required.

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework Provides a New Opportunity to Support Community-based Transitional Training Programs

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework includes Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling as a priority. One of the framework's guiding principles is that programming be inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians including "women and persons with low income." This principle has already translated into some direct investment in training low-income women. The framework also offers new coordination and planning mechanisms, which can strengthen support for current community-based transitional programs and help build the capacity of existing organizations to deliver various types of transitional programming.

What is still missing under the Skills and Learning Framework, however, is firm funding commitments from all partners and an overall business plan with clear goals and appropriate accountabilities.

Limitations to the Skills and Learning Framework Require Further Action on the Part of Both Levels of Government

If a province-wide community-based transitional training and employability preparation infrastructure is to be fully developed so that it takes low-income women's diverse and complex needs into consideration, it will likely require firm commitments and a strategic approach on the part of both levels of government. These should include new and enhanced financial commitments to skills development and lifelong learning, as well as changes to the Employment Insurance Act and regulations so more people may qualify for interventions under Part II of the Act.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to guide the development of a transition-to-employment strategy for low-income women in Nova Scotia:

Partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework

- That community-based transition-to-employment programs are recognized by both levels of government and all departmental partners involved in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework as an appropriate strategy for supporting low-income women in their move into employment.

- That giving due consideration to costs and the fiscal capacity of the province, the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework establish a task group to develop next steps for the development of transition-to-employment programs for low-income women in the Province of Nova Scotia, consistent with the findings of this report, namely that:

  - More stable funding mechanisms are required for community-based organizations currently delivering transitional programs; and funding should extend beyond the present 12-month timeframe so that program delivery may be more efficient and effective and offer a more diverse range of training for low-income women.

  - Transition to employment for women with multiple barriers to employment can be a long-term process and requires program flexibility to enable women to move from one stage of learning to another.

  - Transition-to-employment programs work best when they include various components and approaches specifically designed for low-income women and when they are flexible in design and content and can be tailored to individual needs.

  - Transition-to-employment programs in Nova Scotia should incorporate various components such as prior learning assessment and recognition, educational upgrading (including post-secondary readiness components), pre-employment

programming, community economic development programming, and transition-to-trades-and-technology programming.

- Prior learning mechanisms and processes should be recognized and developed so women can transfer within and between community-based learning and other transition-to-employment programs, and between these and the various programs offered through post-secondary institutions.

- Provision for appropriate support, especially child care, elder and disability care, and transportation costs, should be in place for the duration of all transition-to-employment training programs.

- The specific needs of rural women should be taken into account in relation to access to educational upgrading and other transition-to-employment programs, as well as their particular transportation and caregiving needs and costs.

- Existing community-based women's organizations with a successful record of delivering transition-to-employment programming to low-income women should be considered as a basis for the development of a community-based infrastructure to deliver transitional programs to women across the province.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- That in collaboration with the various partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework and the Round Table for Women's Economic Security, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women continue to provide advice and support for the development and implementation of a strategy to develop community-based transition-to-employment programs for low-income women throughout the province.

Federal and Provincial Governments

- That the federal government review and revise the Employment Insurance Act and regulations to ensure that more women are eligible for benefits and programs.

- That the federal and Nova Scotia governments consider expanding their partnership arrangements under the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Skills and Learning Framework to allow greater flexibility for the development of a jointly funded Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling program in Nova Scotia so that these services can be developed province-wide and in a socially inclusive manner.

- That in the context of a renewed and strengthened LMDA, the federal government consider enhancing its financial support for skills development (outside of its obligations under Part II the EI Act) so that transition-to-employment programs can

be expanded to people in poverty (including women) who are not currently eligible for, or in receipt of, social assistance or EI (sometimes referred to as "gap" clients).

- That both levels of government consider policies that would allow better access for low-income women, including women on social assistance, to post-secondary education.

- That both levels of government consider the need for stable, affordable, and accessible childcare services and focus on the enhancement of these services under the federal government's Early Childhood Development Initiative.

Governments, Business, Labour, Education, and Community Organizations

- That all levels of government, educational institutions, business and labour organizations, and community organizations recognize that everyone has a stake in assisting women to move towards economic independence and that they continue to work together to identify solutions to poverty. These should include ways to improve the quality of jobs in the labour market, better income security programs, accessible and affordable child care, workplace accommodation, improved supports for persons with disabilities, and better access to post-secondary education and continuing learning programs to assist people to participate in the labour market.

1. Women, Poverty, and Precarious Employment

Low wages are a fact of life for many women in Canada, including in Nova Scotia. Women in full-time employment in Nova Scotia in 2001 earned an average weekly wage before tax of $523 (75.8 per cent of men's weekly wage).[1] Gross annual wages at this rate would be $27,196. For many women, however, the economic reality is far worse.

This is especially the case for women who are vulnerable to discrimination or who experience multiple barriers to employment—women with disabilities, women in "visible" communities, immigrant women, older women, and women who are single (lone) parents. Many of these women are unemployed, work in precarious jobs in the labour market, or are on social assistance.

Governments in Canada and in other countries are trying to address the problem of poverty amongst women in various ways. In recent years, Canada has largely focused on the issue of "child poverty." Policies have attempted to reduce family poverty through enhanced child benefits and the redesign of social assistance programs so that single parents and others on social assistance are oriented towards finding employment.

In the context of a more vibrant economy, these policies may have been successful in reducing social assistance caseloads, but the problem of poverty and low income amongst women persists. Researchers warn that for many women, without access to adequate educational upgrading, skills-development programs, and other supports, just getting a job is not a sure route out of poverty.[2]

Women in Precarious Employment

Judith Maxwell (2002) shows that about two-thirds of all workers earning less than $10 an hour in Canada are women and that one-third are the only wage earners in their families.[3] Other data indicate that more than a third of Canadian women with disabilities who were employed full time had earnings among the lowest 20 per cent of earners.[4]

Recent research by GPI Atlantic for the Atlantic Centre of Excellence for Women's Health also demonstrates just how financially insecure and poor many women are in Nova Scotia. In 2002, 69,200 women (or 37 per cent of all women workers) in the province earned less than $10 an hour. A woman working full time, full year at $10 an hour could earn only $17,500, though many women earn less. As a point of comparison, the low-income cutoff in 2000 for a family of two was $18,200. For a family of three, it was $22,600.[5]

Minimum and Low-Wage Statistics for Nova Scotia, 2002[6]

	Total number and cumulative % of all paid employees	Number and cumulative % of paid male employees	Number and cumulative % of paid female employees
Minimum wage*	16,700 (4.5%)	5,300 (3%)	11,400 (6%)
Less than $7 an hour	45,700 (12.4%)	16,200 (9%)	29,500 (16%)
Less than $8 an hour	68,200 (18.6%)	24,200 (13%)	44,000 (24%)
Less than $9 an hour	92,600 (25%)	33,700 (18%)	59,000 (32%)
Less than $10 an hour	112,500 (31%)	43,200 (24%)	69,200 (37%)

Based on a minimum wage of $6.25 (October 1, 2003)

Research by Ron Saunders (2003) for Canadian Policy Research Network indicates that many low-paid workers are employed full time, but both he and Maxwell (2000) argue that an increasing number also work in precarious jobs—temporary, part-time, casual, or other non-standard forms of employment that are characterized by low wages and few benefits.[7] About one in three low-paid workers across Canada works part time, another 29 per cent are in temporary jobs (which can be seasonal, casual, or contract positions), and about one in four has multiple jobs in order to get more hours of paid work.

Saunders (2003) also indicates that despite some narrowing of the gender wage gap over the past 25 years, women continue to be over-represented in both non-standard work and in precarious, low-paid employment. He notes, for example, that 69 per cent of adult workers in Canada earning less than $8 per hour in 2000 were women. Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich (2003), have also shown that although women accounted for 46 per cent of the labour force in 2001, they constituted 63 per cent of those in precarious jobs.[8]

A recent study by Teresa Janz for Statistics Canada also showed that many people are stuck in low-paying jobs. The study found that less than half of Canadian workers who had low-paying jobs in 1996 had climbed out of poverty by 2001. Again there were gender differences. Men were twice as likely to have "moved up" as women, and those most likely to have moved up were young, university-educated men, in professional occupations and industries. The study also showed that low-paid workers in 1996 tended to be young and female and that the incidence of low pay was approximately three times higher for those with a high school education or less, than for those with a university degree. Workers who remained trapped in low-waged jobs in 2001 also had low education levels. They were more likely to be older women working part time for small, non-unionized organizations.[9]

It has also been argued that government policy itself can help to maintain women in this type of employment. As Judith Maxwell points out, "The policy cards are stacked against the exit from low-paid work."[10] Extra work effort, for example, is discouraged through taxes on increased earnings at the lowest marginal rate and the costs of child care are often prohibitive for families, especially for those with more than one child.

Changes in government Employment Insurance (EI) regulations in 1996 are almost certainly related to the growing gender gap in EI eligibility. This may be making women in non-standard employment and precarious work more vulnerable to poverty, because EI eligibility

also affects access to other benefits such as paid parental leave and employment benefits such as skills-development or transition-to-employment programs.

A study carried out by the Canadian Labour Congress, for example, shows that by 2001, the percentage of unemployed women receiving employment insurance benefits had dropped to 33 per cent, down from 70 per cent in 1989. This compares to a 45 per cent rate of coverage for men. Many of the women affected are in the 25 to 44 age range and likely to have young dependent children. The report also contends that the biggest losers since 1996 have been women over age 45. [11]

Furthermore, part-time and many non-standard short-term jobs are often ineligible for non-statutory employment benefits such as health insurance, paid sick leave, and pensions.

In the long term, therefore, jobs in precarious employment lead to long-term financial insecurity and poverty. Given the growth of precarious employment and low-waged work, it is probably not surprising that women on income assistance worry about leaving its relative security. As Butterwick, Bunson, and Rogers (1998) also point out, not only is low-wage work less stable than welfare, it is often incompatible with parental obligations (long hours, early morning or late evening shifts).[12] In addition, these jobs seldom lead to improvements for the future (no career ladders, limited on-the-job training).

Women, Poverty, and Income Assistance

In Nova Scotia, the 2001 census counted 44,135 lone-parent families, of whom 36,632 (or 83 per cent) were headed by women. Of these, 9,039 (24.6 per cent) received some form of income assistance from the Department of Community Services. Many women on income assistance also have disabilities and face particular barriers in the labour market. In 2001, for example, half of income assistance clients in Nova Scotia had a disability. All of these women are unquestionably poor.

Nova Scotia has the highest proportion of the population with some form of disability in Canada. The average income for persons with disabilities in Nova Scotia is 20 per cent lower than for those without disabilities. This discrepancy is roughly the same when incomes are disaggregated by gender, but because women's incomes in general are lower than men's, the average income of women with disabilities is only $13,990.[13] Single mothers do not fare much better. In 1999 (the most recent year for which figures are available) single mothers without jobs had an average income after tax and transfers of only $14,770.[14]

Community Services social assistance caseload data also show that the majority of single mothers on income assistance are 44 years of age or under, while those in the largest category are between the ages of 30 and 44 years of age.[15] For most women, these are prime career development and earning years, and they also provide a basis for pensions in retirement.

The Relevance of Education and Skills Development

As numerous economic and social policy think tanks have noted, however, more than basic literacy and math skills are required to find a decent job in today's knowledge-based

economy. The Caledon Institute, for example, points out that, "... cradle-to-grave lifelong learning is a national imperative. Post-secondary education is becoming an essential credential for more and more jobs." [16]

Those with low levels of education, therefore, are likely to find it difficult to make a living wage or even to move from assistance to employment. As the Caledon Institute, however, has noted:

> ... there remains a wide gulf between the rhetoric of the imperative of lifelong learning in the knowledge economy, and the reality facing many women and men—whether they are working or unemployed …
>
> Opportunities for skills upgrading and lifelong learning are not widely available, but instead tend to go to those who already have the advantages of advanced education, good jobs and values skills.[17]

On this basis, Caledon argues for substantial social policy reform, making the case that social programs should play a more active role in creating and maintaining a skilled and educated workforce.

The link between lower levels of education, unemployment, and poverty appears to be particularly salient for women with disabilities and single (lone) mothers on social assistance. Almost 38 per cent of women with disabilities in Nova Scotia have less than high school education, compared with 26.8 per cent of women in the general population. Recent Nova Scotia Community Services data also show that even as the economy has improved and the overall social assistance caseload has radically fallen, 56.2 per cent of single mothers currently requiring social assistance have less than a grade 12 education.[18]

Women with disabilities and racially visible women also experience disadvantages in the labour market. In 2001 65.5 per cent of women with disabilities were in the labour force, but 45 per cent were unemployed. This compares with a 10.5 per cent unemployment rate for women in the general Nova Scotia population.[19] Aboriginal women and women from racially visible groups also face disadvantages in the labour market, despite having relatively high labour force participation rates. The labour force participation rate for off-reserve aboriginal women, for example, is higher than for non-aboriginal women, but the unemployment rate is 16.4 per cent, versus 10.2 per cent for non-aboriginal women. Women from racially visible groups have a similar labour force participation rate as women in non-racially visible groups, but again their unemployment rate is higher (13.3 per cent versus 10.3 per cent).[20]

Being a lone-parent mother may compound other labour market disadvantages. Lone-parent mothers are more likely than married mothers not to be employed at all (36 per cent versus 23 per cent) or are more likely to be employed part-time (42 per cent versus 37 per cent). These differences are more pronounced for mothers with children under five. Such factors as the availability and cost of child care and the educational disadvantage of some lone-parent mothers may contribute to these employment differences.[21]

Findings from the Family Mosaic Project (FMP), a longitudinal study tracking the life experiences of one- and two-parent families in Nova Scotia, also confirm that low levels of

education combined with lone parenting greatly enhance both the probability and the duration of being on social assistance. As Margaret Dechman, the project coordinator, has pointed out: "Many mothers who require social assistance have found themselves in need because they lack the education and work experience that would enable them to support their families on their own earnings."[22]

Nine "essential skills" have been recognized by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSD)[23] and its counterparts in the US, Australia, and Great Britain as critical to employment in today's labour market. They include reading text, working with others, thinking skills, continuous learning, writing, oral communication, document use, numeracy (math), and computer use. These skills are used in virtually all occupations.

In addition, as elsewhere in North America, grade 12 or its equivalent is generally considered necessary before social assistance clients can be considered employable in most sectors of the labour market.[24] The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, therefore, will support clients in educational upgrading up to grade 12 equivalency, if this supports a client's employability plan.

As far as women are concerned, however, grade 12 may not be enough to ensure a job with a living wage, to say nothing of a family wage. Nova Scotia social assistance caseload data, for example, show that while the majority of social assistance recipients (including single mothers) have less than a grade 12 education, about 43 per cent of single mothers on social assistance report that they have grade 12 or higher.[25]

A report by the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women also found that education appears to be a particularly important factor in women's ability to earn a living wage. Their report clearly links the educational attainment of women to income. It found that "Women must achieve much higher educational attainment to earn a living wage than do men. On average, women must have a university certificate or diploma (below the bachelor level) before their earnings surpass those of men who have less than a high school education."[26]

This brief summary of the data and of recent research on women's vulnerability to poverty, low income, and precarious employment provides the context for the remainder of the report. It reminds us that there are thousands of women in Nova Scotia who struggle daily to feed, house, and clothe themselves and their families, with little or no money left for education, recreation, or savings.

In the context of a new knowledge-based economy, it also underlines the need for stronger support for continuing and adult education, job training, and other strategies to help women move from social assistance or unstable low-waged employment into more stable, better-paid, secure jobs. For single mothers and women with disabilities, in particular, it also points to the need to build into these strategies the supports necessary to help women keep their jobs and build careers.

Summary of Key Points

- Despite efforts to address child poverty and to encourage women on social assistance to find paid employment, low income is a fact of life for many women living in Nova Scotia.

- Precarious employment is increasing, and many women are employed in low-wage, precarious jobs; these women, as well as those on income assistance, live on incomes well below the low-income cutoff.

- Low levels of education, combined with lone parenting or a disability, greatly enhance both the probability and the duration of being poor or on income assistance.

- A basic level of education is a prerequisite for job training, and it is generally recognized that grade 12 equivalency is necessary before a person can be considered "employable" in the labour market. This is recognized by the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

- Nine "essential skills" (reading text, working with others, thinking skills, continuous learning, writing, oral communication, document use, numeracy (math), and computer use) are now critical to employment in today's labour market.

- Women generally need higher levels of education than men to achieve equivalent incomes. Access to post-secondary education should be generally recognized as key to any strategy aimed at moving women on low income into well-paid work.

- The new knowledge-based economy is based on higher literacy requirements, on new technical skills, and on lifelong learning, whereby workers must have the opportunity to upgrade their education and skills.

- Opportunities for skills upgrading, however, are not widely available for low-income people, including women, and there is a need for new strategies to help women to participate in the labour market and move from unstable low-waged employment or social assistance into stable, well-paid, and secure jobs.

- Any transition-to-employment strategy for single mothers and women with disabilities must build in proper supports to help them to maintain their jobs and build careers.

2. The Changing Policy Landscape and Its Implications for Women's Access to Training

The restructuring of federal and provincial social policies and programs since the early 1990s has included federal funding cuts and a new block-funding mechanism for social programs (health, post-secondary education, and social services); the devolution and reorganization of employment development programs; and radical changes to the (un)employment insurance system.

This chapter argues that together, these changes have had negative impacts on low-income women's access to post-secondary education, transition-to-employment, and skills-development programs. The loss of designated status for women within many government-funded programs and funding cuts to community-based organizations have also served to exacerbate the situation.

The Restructuring of Government Programs and Women's Access to Training

In the decade between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s, the federal government initiated (often in collaboration with the provinces) various types of job-training and job-development programs, as well as welfare-to-work initiatives, demonstration projects, and experimental programs, in their attempts to find solutions to higher rates of unemployment and growing social assistance caseloads.

The Canadian Jobs Strategy (CJS) for the unemployed and the SARS Program for social assistance recipients were two such job-training/job-development programs. The CJS included a Re-entry program that was specifically designed for women seeking to enter or re-enter the labour market. Some of the options under these programs combined classroom-based pre-employment and skills-based training with on-the-job experience. Other options used subsidized jobs or wage subsidies in an attempt to encourage the development of jobs through on-the-job training. Later in the development of these programs, a business development option was included. All of these options eventually became available to social assistance recipients under the SARS Program.

Developed in a period of high unemployment and growing social assistance caseloads, the Nova Scotia Compass Program was funded as a demonstration project under a federal strategic initiative in 1994. It was specifically designed to assist social assistance recipients to move into employment. This program used wage subsidies and subsidized jobs similar to the job-development option within the CJS and SARS programs; however, by hiring job developers who actively matched clients with employers, it took a more proactive, "work first" approach to encourage employable clients to move off welfare into jobs. Given the high rate of unemployment at the time, it was designed as a welfare-to-work program most suitable for clients already considered to be "job ready."

Women participated in all of these programs, though it is important to note that, with the exception of the Re-entry option under the CJS, they were not specifically designed for

women or for single mothers. However, specific training projects funded under the CJS Re-entry and SARS Programs (especially those delivered through community-based women's organizations) included components designed for women experiencing multiple barriers to employment. It is also important to note that the main purpose of these programs was to ensure that participants found jobs, but not necessarily jobs that paid a living wage. This became a major drawback for the long-term success of these programs, especially as far as single mothers on social assistance were concerned.[27,28]

After the introduction of the Labour Force Development Strategy in 1989 and the gradual shift of federal funding for skills training from general (consolidated) revenues to the Unemployment Insurance account, access to skills-development programs, especially for people ineligible for UI, began to erode. This particularly affected those program options that were specifically targeted to women.[29] By the early 1990s, the Re-entry option was amalgamated with other CJS programs to form generic project-based training.

There were also further federal cuts to skills-development programs as a result of the federal deficit-cutting budget of 1995. The CJS was completely eliminated, and the funding and the policy base for women-only training programs virtually disappeared. With the development of the new Employment Insurance Act (EI) in 1996, under Part II of the act, access to federally funded job-skills development training for unemployed low-income people ineligible for EI came to a halt. They were, however, eligible for Employment Assistance Services such as counselling, job search skills, job finding clubs, and job placement services.[30]

The revamping of the federal unemployment insurance system in 1996 also entailed a shift of emphasis from *unemployment* insurance to *employment* insurance and to "active measures" to promote employability. These changes signalled that income support programs were no longer considered as "entitlements" but as temporary, mostly short-term, supports to promote self-sufficiency through labour market attachment.

In the wake of the withdrawal of federal funding for skills-development programs described above and in the context of the 1996 EI Act, labour market development agreements (LMDA) were developed between the federal and provincial governments. Under these agreements, seven provinces assumed responsibility for the delivery of the Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM) under Part II of the 1996 Employment Insurance Act. Four provinces (Nova Scotia included) entered into a partnership arrangement with HRDC, while Newfoundland and Labrador negotiated a co-management approach. Ontario, however, remained outside the LMDA process.[31]

Compounding the situation, the 1995 federal budget announced substantial cuts to social programs. The Canada Assistance Plan, upon which the provinces had depended for social security programming since 1966, was dismantled and replaced with the block-funded Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST). Within the context of block funding and a smaller federal social program transfer, income assistance and social services had to compete with health care and post-secondary education for funding and for public support, despite higher rates of unemployment and a growing social assistance caseload at that time.

In the late 1990s, fiscal and other pressures led provincial governments to restructure their social assistance systems to encourage (or in some jurisdictions, force) employable clients to

move from welfare to work. Although there was variation by province, changes included tighter eligibility regulations, a greater emphasis on client "employability," and the implementation of welfare-to-work strategies, including for single mothers.

At the same time, the post-secondary education grant system was replaced with a system of student loans, tuition costs were rising, and single parents on welfare were discouraged by new government policies from pursuing post-secondary education.[32] In addition, the kind of transition-to-employment, job-development, and skills-training programs that might encourage long-term self-sufficiency were being dismantled and replaced with short-term interventions focused on "getting a job" (sometimes referred to as "work first" approaches).

It could be argued that there were few government resources in the deficit-cutting, post-CHST era to go much beyond short-term interventions oriented towards finding work. However in recent years, as provincial governments (including Nova Scotia) attempt to get their own deficits under control, the fiscal situation at the federal level has much improved. Despite this, no new federal funding has found its way into skills-development or job-training programs since 1995.

Implications of Program Restructuring for Women

The shift to an hours-based system and tightened eligibility and qualifying requirements under the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, along with an increase in precarious employment, means that fewer Canadians are now qualifying for Employment Insurance (EI) benefits than in the past. One measure of the extent to which unemployed Canadians are qualifying for EI is the beneficiary-to-unemployed (B/U) ratio. In 2001–2002, the B/U ratio was only 47 per cent.[33]

The CLC contends that women's access to EI has been particularly affected by the changes to EI.[34] An important point to emphasize here is that, since fewer women are qualifying for EI, fewer women are eligible for employment benefits such as wage subsidies and skills-development programming under Part II of the EI Act. According to the Canada Employment Commission Report for 2001–2002, only about one-third of all EI claimants had access to employment supports, and only 34.4 per cent of employment support interventions in Nova Scotia were directed towards women.[35]

Joan McFarland's overview of the growth and demise of women's access to job training in New Brunswick between the 1970s and 1990s makes a powerful case that the biggest barrier to women's training today lies in the withdrawal of federal government funding for training.[36] Data collected for her study clearly demonstrate that as government-funded programs changed or disappeared in the new market-driven economy of the 1990s, training options for women also virtually disappeared.

As Advocates for Community–based Training and Education for Women (ACTEW) noted in 2000, access to training for those "who need it the most—the long-term unemployed, aboriginal people, single mothers, older workers at risk, persons with disabilities and people who are underemployed—are least likely to be eligible for programs" under the EI legislation.[37]

In response to these changes, one policy analyst pointed out that apart from short-term employability interventions and a very limited number of longer-term programs assigned to social assistance recipients, "there is no longer a source of federal government funds targeted at women who have no pre-existing attachment to the labour market and are not current or recent EI beneficiaries."[38]

Together, these policy and program changes have translated into large losses in skills-development, training, and employment programming for women. It appears that low-income people, especially women, are increasingly being denied access to skills-development programs. The result has been particularly problematic for individual women, women's programs, and women's organizations. As Joan McFarland contends, "A woman wishing to undertake skills-development training has few chances if she or a family member does not have the funds to pay for it."[39]

Impact of Program Restructuring on Community-Based Program Delivery

Funding cuts and program restructuring in the 1990s also had a negative impact on the infrastructure of community-based organizations that previously provided transitional training or support to women seeking employment as well as on national voluntary and women's organizations that promoted skills development and adult learning for women.[40]

With the demise of requirements to consider the unique training needs of women in federal programs, and with the other program changes discussed above, core financial support for many community-based organizations working with women or those still delivering transition-to-employment programs was withdrawn. Direct purchasing, whereby the federal government reimbursed organizations for the full costs of providing training (including both user fees and overhead costs), ceased, and organizations had to rely on project funding.

Together, all of these changes have severely limited the capacity of women's organizations to continue to offer transition-to-employment and other supportive programs for women. This has been particularly problematic for the community-based training delivery sector, where low-income women wanting to re-enter the labour market were often served.[41]

Discussions with directors of non-profit organizations that continue to work with low-income women in Nova Scotia indicate that the lack of core or multi-year funding and the necessity of juggling the requirements of the different funding mandates of federal and provincial programs are among the biggest difficulties they face in meeting the needs of low-income women. Short-term project-based funding severely hampers the ability of organizations to plan on a long-term basis, because it destabilizes organizations' staffing structures and leads to fragmentation of program delivery.

These directors noted, for example, the capriciousness of the current funding system, which requires organizations to submit new applications for each new project on an annual basis, with limited leeway to obtain funding to replicate successful projects. One organization reported waiting 15 months before learning that funding was in place for a re-entry project. So as not to lose precious weeks once the clock started ticking, organizers had to scramble at the last moment to find participants in order to get the program under way.

One women's organization identified numerous challenges limiting women's involvement in mainstream community economic development (CED) when this was being developed in Nova Scotia in the mid-1990s. With the assistance of several federal and provincial departments, this organization spent 18 months putting together a proposal that cobbled together project-based funding from different government departments in order to develop a comprehensive provincial strategy to respond to women's lack of involvement. Even so, funding was only available to deliver the program through a two-year pilot program in three Nova Scotia counties (Antigonish, Cape Breton, and Annapolis). The evaluation described the project's achievements as impressive, but core or program funding to deliver a province-wide CED program for women was not forthcoming. The organization has continued its work in CED through the development of short-term projects, but believes that longer-term, more stable funding through one department with a clear mandate for CED would achieve better results.

Another problem identified by community-based organizations delivering project-based services is the "red tape" necessary in order to obtain project funding and the level of accountability reporting demanded once a project is funded. While organizations recognize that proper reporting mechanisms are important for accountability purposes, the level of detail currently required on a monthly basis is burdensome for small organizations dependent on volunteer boards.

These concerns are all part of the "worrisome trends" for the voluntary sector that have been well documented in a recent report by the Canadian Council on Social Development. This report warns that unless government funding strategies are modified the voluntary sector will suffer from increasing insecurity and their ability to achieve their various missions will continue to erode. "In the end," the report, continues, "all Canadians will be the losers."[42]

Transition-to-Employment Programs and the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework

In the context of growing unemployment in the early-1990s, many American and a number of Canadian jurisdictions initially promoted work for welfare as a "quick fix" to reduce the social assistance rolls on the premise that "any job is better than no job." However, as Maureen Baker (1996) writes: "In nations such as Canada with high unemployment rates, vast discrepancies between the wages of men and women, and a severe shortage of affordable and regulated child care, focusing on employability [i.e., regulations that enforce work-for-welfare or welfare-to-work requirements] has negative consequences for many individuals as well as social policy."[43]

Some policy analysts and program planners have also begun to recognize the short-sightedness of this type of short-term strategy. HRDC's "Lessons Learned" series notes, for example, that: "Rapid start employment strategies, while most effective for job-ready social assistance recipients, appear to have limited long-term impacts."[44] Nova Scotia also recognizes that employability means more than the imposition of stringent welfare-to-work requirements and that in many instances "work first" approaches are inadequate, especially for the marginally employed or those with multiple barriers to employment.

After the demise of training programs and the development of LMDAs documented above, a first step towards recognizing the training needs of low-income women, including the special supports and services they need to access and maintain employment, began four years ago with a Memorandum of Understanding between the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and HRDC. In 2002–2003 employability was informally identified as a priority under the Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the recognition of the training needs of low-income women was reinforced.

In 2002–2003, this principle translated into more direct investment in transition-to-employment programming. Of the 44 projects funded under the employability priority in the Western Region, a high proportion dealt almost exclusively with women. Though most were short-term training projects, many were considered transition programs for women.[45]

Several projects in other regions were of longer duration and specifically directed towards low-income women. Some examples include the following:

- The Abundance Program (Cape Breton)
- Women's Innovation (Cape Breton)
- Linkages Program (Cape Breton)
- On the Road to Employability (Northern Region)
- Developing Personal Skills for Job Readiness (Northern Region)

Governments are also beginning to recognize that in a knowledge-based economy and in labour markets characterized by demands for higher-skilled workers, work experience, though important, is not enough on its own to develop human capital or to ensure that people are able to find stable, well-paid employment.

In 2002, for example, the federal government identified several issues related to the development of skills in a knowledge-based economy in two documents—*Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians* and *Achieving Excellence: Investing in People, Knowledge and Opportunity*—when it outlined the government's new innovation strategy.

Knowledge Matters recognizes that Canada must continuously renew and upgrade the skills of its workforce. It argues that "we can no longer assume that the skills acquired in youth will carry workers through their active lives." It proposes that "our learning system must be strengthened if we are to meet the skills and labour force demands of the next decade."

Knowledge Matters proposed to meet the skills-development needs of Canadians by making "the best use of resources for active labour market measures" through existing labour market development partnerships with the provinces and territories. The document also says that in co-operation with the provinces the federal government will "consider ... targeted skills development initiatives" for those with low levels of literacy or foundation skills and particular barriers to the labour market.[46]

Although there are few other concrete proposals in *Knowledge Matters* to meet the needs of low-income women, one specific proposal of relevance in *Knowledge Matters* is to make post-secondary education more financially accessible by improving student financial assistance.

The 2004 federal budget announced a new grant of up to $3,000 for first-year post-secondary education for students from low-income families and an annual grant of up to $2,000 for students with disabilities. The federal budget also included several measures related to increasing the loan and debt ceilings, with a higher maximum for debt reduction for students facing financial difficulties.[47] However, few low-income women in precarious employment, without a job, and with a family to support are likely to be able or willing to take advantage of increased financial assistance if this means accumulating a large student debt.

Another proposal is to encourage low-income and moderate-income people currently in the workforce to participate in post-secondary education by "learning while they earn."[48] The 2004 federal budget went some way to address this issue when it promised to develop, in co-operation with the provinces, a new workplace skills strategy with "practical options and priorities for action" in the areas of literacy, essential skills upgrading, apprenticeships in skills trades and employer-based training.[49]

Nova Scotia formally concurred with the goals in *Knowledge Matters* and in 2003 joined with the federal government to develop the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework (to be referred to as Skills and Learning Framework). The framework builds on *Knowledge Matters* and the 1999 Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Agreement (LMDA) to develop a more coordinated and planned approach to priorities for skills-development programming in Nova Scotia and to expand the umbrella of government and non-government partnerships that can contribute to achieving the framework's goals.

A guiding principle under the Skills and Learning Framework is that programming should be inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians including "women and persons with low income"; and a strategic goal in the framework is to "enhance the employability of those who are employment-disadvantaged and/or who are currently under-represented in the workforce."[50] The Skills and Learning Framework has also defined Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling as one of five priority areas. The others are Apprenticeship; Learning and Earning; immigration; labour market information; and youth (which also has a separate Canada–Nova Scotia protocol agreement). Literacy, information technology, and entrepreneurship are integrated as cross-cutting themes.[51]

The Skills and Learning Framework, therefore, presents a further step towards an approach that has the potential to move beyond a limited "work first" approach to a transition-to-employment for low-income women who are unemployed, marginally employed, or fully dependent on social assistance in Nova Scotia.

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework: New Opportunities for Low-Income Women?

The intention of the Skills and Learning Framework is to respond to changes in Nova Scotia's labour market, and to address skills shortages and learning challenges through the articulation of specific priorities. It proposes to make strategic investments in four priority areas, including Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling and Apprenticeship, Learning, and Earning[52] The framework also proposes that the two levels of government address the skills gaps of Nova Scotians through partnerships with business,

labour, industry, education, and training organizations and in conjunction with communities.[53]

Under the Employability, Career Development and Employment Counselling priority, two strategic directions were identified for 2003–2004: to ensure the availability of learning opportunities that enhance employability skills and to enhance employability and/or encourage employment opportunities for those who have been socially and economically excluded. The Employability priority in the framework builds, to some extent, on initiatives similar to those outlined in the previous section. Data from fiscal 2003–2004 indicate that as of December 2003 approximately 32 employability-related projects had been funded. A number of these were directed towards women.

In some areas of the province, women's organizations have already taken advantage of the framework's new priorities to develop programs specifically focused on women. The Pre-employment/Re-entry Programs for Women delivered through women's centres in Antigonish, New Glasgow, and Sydney are a prime example. Another example is the Equity in Technology Project, a pilot project to support the advancement of women in the fields of science and technology, sponsored by the Women's CED Network.[54]

Discussions with Community Services staff, confirmed through discussion with women's centres, also indicate that many of these projects accept a limited number of so-called "gap" clients—women who are neither eligible for access to programming under the EI Act nor in receipt of provincial income assistance. Depending on regional priorities, training projects funded through Community Services now allow up to 30 per cent of participants in some projects to be gap clients. This reflects what the department calls a "preventative" approach, providing service to individuals before they are put in the situation of having to apply for income assistance.

In line with the ideas presented in *Knowledge Matters*, the Skills and Learning Framework also proposes to build on two approaches to skills development: "learn and earn" (i.e., easier access to financial assistance for part-time education or training) and "earn and learn" (promoting on-the-job training and especially entry into apprenticeship training). Depending on how they develop in practice, and especially if they are developed in combination with transition-to-employment programming, these approaches could offer new opportunities for low-income women to undertake further education or training, including in the fields of trades and technology occupations, where they are now extremely under-represented.

The new priorities and the more coordinated approach to planning and partnership development under the Skills and Learning Framework, therefore, are positive beginnings for recognizing the transition-to-employment needs of low-income people, including women. At present the Skills and Learning Framework is in a period of development, and this offers the possibility of a second look at how transition-to-employment programs should be funded and delivered in Nova Scotia.

Building upon the existing infrastructure of women-centred community-based organizations throughout the province, the Skills and Learning Framework could offer an opportunity to establish a more coordinated province-wide approach to programming for women. The framework could also be the impetus for Nova Scotia to develop new transition-to-

employment options for low-income women. Fortunately, there is a growing body of information and evidence about the kind of programs that are most likely to succeed and lead to more stable employment for low-income women. These will be discussed more fully in Chapters 3 and 4.

Limitations of the Skills and Learning Framework

In the meantime, it must be recognized that as it exists today, there are some limitations in the Skills and Learning Framework for changing the way in which projects are currently funded, for enhancing current delivery approaches and options, and for building capacity to deliver transition-to-employment programs for women province-wide.

First, the Skills and Learning Framework is not, and nor was it intended to be, a new funding program. It is simply a way of enhancing effectiveness through better planning and coordination of federal and provincial government efforts within jointly established priorities in the areas of adult learning and skills development. These priorities and strategic directions within these priorities are established yearly, but there do not appear to be any ongoing or overarching principles or strategic goals to guide the framework as a whole.

Each of the partners in the framework is encouraged to contribute to identifying the framework's priorities and to build these into their own business plans, but no new money has been specifically committed to these by either level of government, and the current project-based funding regime for transition-to-employment programs, with all its limitations and drawbacks, remains more or less unchanged.

Moreover, although there is to be a jointly approved Skills and Learning Business Plan for 2004–2005, and each of the eight federal and provincial partners in the framework is committed to achieving the priority goals in the framework, not all partners in the framework are equally obliged to make firm financial commitments to invest directly in the Employability priority, in transition-to-employment programs, or in projects directed towards women.

Because of their respective mandates, HRSD and the Department of Community Services (DCS) have made specific financial commitments to fund programming under the Employability priority. Under the framework's 2003–2004 Business Plan, in addition to $3 million for youth, HRSD committed about $12 million and DCS about $3 million to the Employability and Career Development priority. In addition, the Department of Education contributes to the Employability priority through assigning resources for career development coordination and by funding literacy organizations to deliver literacy programs.

Other departments are encouraged to include the framework's priorities in their business plans and to make contributions to these as they are able or see fit within the context of their mandates. These investments are important and contribute to the overall Employability priority under the framework and, in specific instances, to the development of transition-to-employment programming for low-income women.

Outside of the framework, in 2003–2004 the Office of Economic Development also funded each of the eight women's centres in Nova Scotia to deliver year-long projects to foster

economic independence for their clients. These Economic Well-being of Women projects are delivering services to low-income women, while at the same time are helping the centres to improve their results-based accountability mechanisms.

It is unclear, however, whether Employability will remain a priority in the coming years, what additional longer-term financial commitments (if any) will be forthcoming from the various partnering department under this priority, or whether these commitments will be directed specifically towards the delivery of transition-to-employment programming for low-income women.

Though priorities are identified centrally and on a collaborative basis, business plans and decisions on funding related to the priorities are made on the recommendation of regionally based Service Delivery Partnership Committees (SDPC). Funding within the Employability priority, though, is not necessarily targeted to specific groups. It will, therefore, be left to women's transitional training delivery organizations already up and running in the regions to build relationships with these committees, submit project proposals, and participate as best they can in regional planning processes. Under these circumstances, it will be a challenge to develop province-wide transitional programs for low-income women across the province.

Another major drawback of the Skills and Learning Framework is that most of the funding remains project based. It is difficult to build a program (to say nothing of a system) on project funding alone.

Although all of the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework, especially Education, appear to do their best to coordinate their efforts and are working as best they can to ensure that low-income women have access to programming, their funding commitments are, by necessity, tied to the program mandates and funding parameters of their respective jurisdictions and departments.

In the case of HRSD, this means that funding is not only project based, but is also available only to those who qualify for the Employment Benefits and Support Measures (EBSM) program under Part II of the EI Act. In the case of Community Services, their first priority under the Employment Support and Income Assistance (ESIA) Program is to focus on employability programs directed towards social assistance recipients. Though some gap clients at risk of requiring income assistance may, at the discretion of the local DCS office, participate in transition-to-employment programs, unemployed low-income women who are not on social assistance or who are ineligible for employment benefits through HRSD programs, have very little direct help to improve their job-related skills.

In summary, all of this means that although the Skills and Learning Framework provides the opportunity for more local decision making, joint planning, and coordination in the context of the framework's priorities, funding commitments are still made department by department; funding is still project based; specific funding priorities and decisions are made regionally; and there are major gaps in who can be served.

As a result, funding for transition-to-employment programs for women remains piece-meal; occurs on a project-by-project basis; and limits projects to a 12-month timeframe, though

most are shorter than this. In addition, many women who could benefit from transition-to-employment programming are excluded.

In order to respond more effectively to the transition-to-employment and training needs of low-income women in the short and medium term, each of the federal and provincial partners in the Skills and Learning Framework needs to make specific investments in the Employability priority, with better targeting of these investments towards low-income women. There also needs to be a move away from project-based funding.

In the context of a more stable fiscal environment (especially at the federal level), governments should now be in a better financial position to reconsider improving their funding priorities and program commitments so that capacity to deliver training at the community level can be developed and rebuilt.

Knowledge Matters recognized that our learning systems must be strengthened if the skills and labour force demands of the next decade are to be met, but it contains few specific proposals to meet the training and continuing education needs of those who are under-employed, marginally employed, working in precarious jobs, or with little labour market attachment (and low-income women are likely to be over-represented in each of these groups). If governments are to successfully develop the skills of *all* Canadians, they must jointly ensure better access to various learning and job skills programs for low-income people.

In the longer term, a province-wide approach to transition-to-employment programming for all low-income Nova Scotians should be developed, including for low-income women. If this is to happen, however, other strategies will be required, including enhanced investment.

A major impediment to achieving this broader goal is that the federal government's commitment to skills development for low-income Canadians is limited by the EI Act and regulations, which has reduced access to employment insurance and benefits. It is also constrained by the fact that federal direct investment in transition-to-employment programs is limited to what can be made available under Part II of the act.

Strengthening the EI Act so that it includes more unemployed Canadians and enhancing federal contributions to skills development outside of the act may be a prerequisite for developing province-wide transition-to-employment programs.

Summary of Key Points

- The economic situation of low-income women has been affected by structural changes in the labour market. Policy changes in the 1990s resulted in a restructuring of social programs; the loss of designated status for women in government-funded programs and funding cuts to community-based organizations have not improved the situation.

- These changes, and especially those associated with the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, have translated into disproportionate losses for women's access to skills-development, training, and employment programming.

- The biggest barrier to women's ability to access transition-to-employment programming today lies in the lack of government funding for skills development and training.

- The Canada–Nova Scotia Labour Market Development Agreement and the new priorities under the Skills and Learning Framework offer a new opportunity to assist some low-income women to move into more stable employment through the funding of transitional programming.

- One of the framework's guiding principles, that programming be inclusive and accessible to all Nova Scotians, including "women and persons with low income," has already translated into limited direct investment in transitional programming for low-income women.

- A coordinated approach to employability exists, but still missing under the Skills and Learning Framework are new funding mechanisms and firm financial commitments to the priorities on the part of all federal and provincial partners in the framework.

- An overall strategic approach to developing province-wide transition-to-employment preparation that takes into consideration the diverse and complex needs of women on low income has also not yet been developed.

- A major constraint on the effectiveness of the framework's priorities is the lack of specific financial commitments by the federal government in *Knowledge Matters* to realistically assist low-income people, including women, to access skills-development training, as well as the limitations of the EI Act and its more restrictive access to programming.

3. Transition-to-Employment Strategies: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

Over the past decade, in efforts to assist people to become financially independent through employment, governments and community organizations have implemented various transition-to-employment approaches, with varying degrees of success. Some programs, especially those focused on a transition from welfare to work were explicitly experimental. Others have been the subject of extensive evaluation.

Policy analysts and program evaluators, therefore, have carefully watched and assessed this experimental landscape and now have some evidence about what works and what does not work in terms of assisting a transition to employment. They have found that there are no quick-fix or cheap solutions to ensuring stable employment, especially for single parents.[55] As will be discussed in the next chapter on improving living standards, there is also no assurance that even stable employment offers real economic security.

But at the same time, a review of the literature indicates that best practices do exist to enable people with low incomes to move along a continuum from social assistance, precarious employment, and low income to more stable, better-paid jobs. Almost all successful approaches require time (two to three years' minimum for many individuals) and a mix of interventions, including access to education.

Using a variety of sources, this chapter considers lessons learned from experimental government programs and other program evaluation results; research related to women's education and learning; as well as best practices for the kind of transition-to-employment programs that are most likely to succeed and serve the interests and needs of low-income women. On the basis of this evidence, the chapter will make some key recommendations for consideration in developing the employability component of the Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework and for moving forward on the development of transition-to-employment strategies for low-income women.

Instead of the quick-fix or the "one size fits all" approach, most research and program evaluation literature recommends longer-term interventions and a mix of strategies that provide access to education and address individual client needs and barriers. A study of European approaches to active welfare and employment policies by Rob Anderson holds that "access must be given to a wide range of supporting services concerned with education, literacy, health, social skills and confidence as well as to directly related job services."[56]

A recent survey of 31 mayors in the United States also confirms the view that the most successful approaches to counteracting lack of skills among social assistance recipients are those that offered a range of service options with a mix of education and training, as determined by each person's specific situation and by the skill requirements of jobs in the local labour market.[57]

HRSD supports this position. Their research notes that for social assistance recipients, a flexible approach that provides a variety of interventions and services is the best strategy to achieving effective results, particularly when focused on individual needs.[58] Another cross-national assessment of training programs found that for economically disadvantaged people who have had long periods on welfare or with low education, academic upgrading is an essential prerequisite to economic independence and to job training. On the basis of the evidence, this study argues that education and training should be much more tightly bound and that job training should be viewed as simply part of a sequence of increased competency. One major finding of the study was that "(T)he better the basic education possessed by a person, the more likely that training will allow him or her to move to economic independence."[59]

It is also now universally accepted that before people with disabilities or single mothers can be expected to make the move from social assistance to employment, in addition to access to education and training, there must be adequate supports. Employability programs must be supported by policies that cover childcare costs, health benefits, and transportation. Without these supports, single mothers and women with disabilities will experience difficulties in their pursuit of stable employment.

Key Services and Supports Essential

All Canadian provinces now recognize the critical role that child care plays in any employability strategy. Only Quebec, however, has implemented a universal publicly supported childcare plan. Countries within the European Union (EU) not only ensure that working mothers have access to affordable child care, they also provide access to quality early years' childhood education. The EU's aim is to provide all children with up to two years of tax-supported education (on a voluntary basis) before the beginning of compulsory education.

The recent restructuring of Nova Scotia's social assistance system has taken some of these key needs into consideration. At present, parents on income assistance and involved in an employability plan can receive up to $400 a month for their childcare needs. Income assistance recipients involved in an employability plan can also receive up to $150 a month for transportation expenses.[60] Nova Scotia's new social assistance regulations also extend medical benefits (prescriptions, dental coverage, eye examinations, and eyeglasses) for a one-year transitional period as an incentive to maintain employment.

Access to dependable, affordable child care, even when this is subsidized, still remains a challenge for working parents with children or for single mothers wanting to make a transition to employment. As of 2001, 69 per cent of children in Nova Scotia have mothers in the paid labour force, but only 8.1 per cent were in regulated childcare spaces. Only 28 per cent (2,655) of these childcare spaces were subsidized.[61] Financial assistance for transportation is often inadequate, especially in rural areas of the province.

Strategies to Build Human Capital

A longitudinal study of lone parents by Kapsalis and Tourigny (2002) found that half of social assistance recipients exit the system within the first two years, but the longer a person

remains on assistance, the more difficult it is to exit.[62] This confirms patterns already known to staff who work with income assistance recipients.

Margaret Dechman has noted that the single mothers who are more likely to experience difficulty exiting the system are those with lower education levels Rather than work-for-welfare or work-first approaches, however, the evidence in the Kapsalis and Tourigny study speaks to the need for longer-term strategies that develop human capital through education and training before clients enter the job market.

Various HRDC-sponsored evaluations have also identified the value of using a human capital approach that goes beyond reliance on work experience alone to emphasize the importance of education and skills training. Findings from recent American research on welfare and families also confirm that investments in education make a difference.

Research on identical twins, for example, showed that each year of additional education raised later earnings of the more educated twin by 13 per cent; after controlling for family background and test scores in high school, one year of post–high school education increased earnings by 5 to 10 per cent, and a year of formal on-the-job training raised wages for non-college youth as much as a year of college.[63]

A broader review of evaluation, best practices, adult education, and other literature offers additional insights into effective approaches to help people with limited employability skills to move into stable employment. Some of these approaches, including the issue of access to education, and the current skills-development situation in Nova Scotia are discussed below.

Access to Educational Upgrading and Post-Secondary Education

Several HRDC studies have identified education as a central plank in a mix of services aimed at moving people beyond low-wage jobs.[64] As one study concluded, "Longer-term programs that raise the basic academic qualification of those on income assistance have the greatest potential for addressing their needs."[65] Access to education, therefore, is recognized as key to any strategy aiming to move persons on low income into well-paid work. As discussed earlier, this appears to be particularly important for women.

The Family Mosaic Research Project, a 20-year longitudinal study of single and married mothers in Nova Scotia, clearly links employment and income to educational attainment.[66] The study found that "deficiencies in qualifications, form the greatest deterrents to employment." It also found that whether they were married or single, women who became mothers as teenagers had the lowest levels of education. If these mothers did manage to find employment, they were more likely to have a series of jobs in low-paid service positions than in more-stable professional or semi-professional employment.

The same study also found that a mother's low educational attainment and low income had repercussions for her children, because children often emulate their mother's educational attainment. Investing in education for low-income single mothers, therefore, makes good economic sense in the long term and can be a powerful strategy for breaking the cycle of poverty.[67]

The National Centre on Family Homelessness in the United States also stresses the critical role that education and training play in the lives of very low income women. Their research calls for "a broad array of educational and training opportunities including access to community-based colleges."[68]

Both the Nova Scotia Department of Education and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services concur that access to education is important if people are expected to achieve financial independence through employment.

Nova Scotia's Department of Education supports educational upgrading in several ways through support of approximately 30 literacy organizations that provide literacy upgrading for people in their communities using one-to-one classroom-based models. Approximately 60 per cent of participants in these programs are women.

The department has also recently established the Nova Scotia High School Graduation Diploma for Adults. Under this program, adults who are 19 years of age and older and who have been out of the public school system for one year or more can obtain credits towards a high school diploma through adult high schools operated by school boards and by the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC). The program is tuition free and meets the entrance requirements for post-secondary programs in colleges and universities. Diploma credits may also be obtained through prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR) processes, which take into account and evaluate previous formal education, training, and experience.

In Nova Scotia, social assistance clients whose employability plan includes post-secondary education, therefore, may be supported for up to two years while they attend job-oriented programs at the community college. The Department of Community Services also covers the costs of tuition, books, and related fees.

In 2003–2004, some 300 community college seats were made available across the province for Community Services clients (almost double the number of seats available the previous year).[69] As of September 2003, some 256 of these seats were filled, 189 (74 per cent) by female clients. It is hoped that the number of seats available through this Educate to Work program will increase annually to provide larger numbers of low-income women with opportunities for enhanced economic security.

Community Services imposed a two-year limit on support for social assistance recipients undertaking post-secondary education and no longer supports women who want to enrol in university programs. The province's position on post-secondary education is based on labour market information that links skills training through the Nova Scotia Community College to job openings in the labour market.

There is evidence to support this claim, but it is also worth noting that data on education and employment income for Nova Scotia suggest that those with a university degree have significantly higher incomes than those who hold a community college certificate or diploma and that these higher returns on university education increase with age.[70] For most low-income women, however, the financial burden of paying for a university education may be too high, considering the high costs of tuition. This problem is undoubtedly compounded for single mothers raising children.

A community college graduate follow-up survey for 2003 showed that 88 per cent of all respondents (90 per cent of females) were employed in the labour force and that 78 per cent (82 per cent of females) were employed in their field of study. The overall average annual salary of graduates who were employed full time in their field of study was $25,375. Women did better than men in terms of employment; however, there was a gender wage gap in the average annual salaries after graduation. The average salary for men was $27,057, while for women it was only $23,493. It should also be noted that there was a great deal of variation in average salaries for both women and men depending on the level of credential obtained (e.g., certificate, diploma, or advanced diploma).[71]

Some of the gender gap can be explained by the fact that, as in the labour force generally, female community college students are concentrated in a narrow range of programs related to the clerical, health, and services sectors (i.e., tourism, office administration, and human services). As the Women's CED Network's *Digital Divide* report points out: "Although almost half of the students in the NSCC are women, they make up only twenty-six per cent of Information Technology students and ten per cent of those enrolled in trades and technology courses."[72]

Women in Nova Scotia Community College programs are clearly choosing certain fields of study over others, but this may also mask other issues. The lack of women in certain program fields, for example, may be related to the recruitment strategies of the college. Although the NSCC has made significant strides in expanding its range of program offerings in recent years, the range of programs offered through the college is still relatively limited.

In some provinces, one partial solution to the problem of broadening post-secondary options, improving university access, and reducing overall student debt is to provide more academic options through community colleges while also ensuring that two-year community college diplomas are transferable for university credit towards a degree. This helps women and others to reduce the average cost of their education, gain some work experience between college and university, and gauge their interest in pursuing a particular field of study before investing in the final few years of an undergraduate degree. Efforts are being made to encourage universities to do the same in Nova Scotia, but so far only the University College of Cape Breton recognizes community college diplomas for credit.

As a strategy to break the cycle of poverty and reliance on low income, however, it is especially important that better ways are found to enable low-income women, especially single mothers, to access a range of post-secondary education programs, including university programs, if this contributes to a viable transition to employment and increased earning potential. At present, though, there are few options for low-income women whose career plans require university training—whether they are on social assistance or working—other than taking on the burden of a student loan and working part time.

Job Training Programs

As discussed in Chapter 2, in the wake of social program restructuring in the mid-1990s, most programs specifically designed to enable women to re-enter or make a transition to employment were abandoned. In addition, experimental programs to assist in the search for

welfare-to-work solutions continued well into the 1990s. Most of these programs were the subjects of extensive evaluation. The discussion below draws on the key findings of relevance to this paper as well as on related research.

A national evaluation of the CJS Job Entry Program, which ran during the 1980s and early 1990s and included a Re-entry component for women, confirms the importance of combining more formal learning with on-the-job experience as a strategy to enable recent labour force entrants and re-entrants who are encountering employment difficulties to move into the mainstream economy. The evaluation found strong positive results for the majority of trainees with respect to post-employment and earnings.[73] [74] The report also found that the majority of women in the Re-entry component exhibited positive post-program employment and earnings. In the case of employability, the Atlantic region (and Ontario) showed the largest gains; and in the case of earnings, the largest estimated increases were for participants in the Atlantic region.[75]

These job-training and job-development programs, however, were less successful in moving single parents on social assistance into stable employment that also paid a living wage. Evaluations of the Nova Scotia SARS and COMPASS programs, though specifically designed for social assistance recipients, found that the employment outcomes for single parents were limited. In part, this was because the programs did not adequately take into account the types of barriers single mothers faced, such as access to affordable and reliable child care, affordable and reliable transportation, and health benefits.[76] The Nova Scotia SARS evaluation also found that for those single mothers who did find jobs, wages were not high enough to enable them to move off assistance completely.[77]

A major lesson learned from SARS and COMPASS, therefore, was that if welfare-to-work programs were to be successful some form of income supplementation or incentive, combined with subsidized child care, health benefits, transportation allowances, and other supports, would be essential over the full transition-to-employment period.

Based on these evaluations, today's employability programming in Nova Scotia takes into account some of these barriers when assisting single mothers to make a transition to employment. This information was also used to inform social assistance reform in Nova Scotia during the late 1990s.

At the national level, evaluations of the CJS, SARS, and other transition-to-employment programs also conclude that job-development programs should be more flexible and should include a variety of options and better linkages with adult education programs, employers, and others in local communities. The design and delivery of training projects should also pay more attention to the educational deficits of the economically disadvantaged, sequencing of skills (e.g., ladders of competency), as well as effective on-the-job training placements and better account of local labour markets.[78]

In line with some of these findings, governments and departments involved in the delivery of labour force development programs have tended to decentralize their programs to the regional or local level and build partnerships with institutions and labour market organizations. The Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, for example, has recently developed partnerships with the Nova Scotia Community College and the

province's Industry Sector Councils to develop and deliver short-term training programs for employable clients in areas identified as having labour shortages. These clients are currently receiving skills training in the flooring trade along with related training in "essential skills."[79] Other clients have received skills training in the hotel industry as well as related essential skills training. Subsequently, all received offers of employment. These programs were designed, mainly, for employment-ready individuals.

As the Family Mosaic Project findings suggest, however, "while some lone-parent social assistance recipients can be integrated into employment through short-term training or readjustment strategies, other more marginalized clients must have intensive support." For those with temporary lapses in employment, this should include employment-related supports such as child care, as well as training; but for the longer-term social assistance recipients it should include specialized initiatives "to get them to the point that they can take advantage of such employment-related support."[80]

Jane Millar points out in her assessment of several programs for single mothers in Europe and in New Zealand that the transition to employment can be a long-term process and should not be viewed simply as a means of reaping savings on welfare costs.[81]

The long-term nature of the transition-to-employment process for women with multiple barriers was also highlighted in the 1989 Evaluation of the Job Entry Program, which found that the most successful transition programs involving female social assistance recipients were those developed by community and women's groups. That same evaluation also found that long-term programming was a necessity for positive results.[82] The Department of Community Services also now recognizes that interventions for those with multiple barriers to employment need to be longer term.

At the same time, it should also be recognized that long-term transitional programming is not necessarily required for all women interested in finding or preparing for employment. Many women receive the appropriate counselling and direction from employment counsellors and job developers with the Employment Support Services established under Community Services or through the job-seeking services at HRSD Human Resources Centres. Women benefiting from these services, however, are more likely to have previous employment experience and may only require assistance with the job application process.

Other women, including some single parents, may have few if any barriers apart from limited on-the-job experience or skills training. These women may be comfortable in co-ed or generic programming. Women taking part in Community Services programming directed at specific skills training identified by the Industry Sector Councils, for example, appear to be ready and comfortable training side-by-side with male colleagues.

Longer-term transition programs specifically designed for women, however, have been found to be both an appropriate and an effective strategy for many other women, especially for those wanting to re-enter the labour force after an extended absence, for some women who have been on income assistance for some time, and for other women facing multiple barriers to stable employment.

Longer-term Re-entry or Transitional Programs for Women

The Ad Hoc Committee on Transition Research of the Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues argued that "the many societal barriers which often prevent women from achieving good jobs in the first place," are "the very issues which make transition training programs critically necessary."[83] For many women, therefore, one of the most effective strategies for moving to employment has been participation in re-entry, transition-to-employment, or bridging programs specifically designed for women.

Just prior to the major restructuring of social and employment development programs documented in Chapter 2, when the Canadian government still funded re-entry programs for women under the CJS, the Canadian literature was full of references to the benefits of transition programs for women and the need to ensure their development. The Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women (CCLOW),[84] the Women's Reference Group on Labour Market Issues,[85] Women in Trades and Technologies (WITT), the Canadian Labour Market Force Development Board, and HRDC's "Lessons Learned" series, all spoke of the benefits of a supportive environment for women to try out new skills and take risks through women-only training.

Some advocates who support women-only programs do so on the basis that these will help to compensate for the inequities or abuse some women have suffered. Programs designed specifically for women, for example, provide an environment in which they can communicate freely. Others argue that because women's approach to learning differs radically from men's (relational versus competency based), women who are in a transitional learning phase may require programming that is more compatible with women's ways of learning.[86] Advocates for Community-based Training and Education for Women (ACTEW), located in Ontario, also promotes transition-to-employment programming to ensure that women are not left behind in the race to develop technology skills. Their research indicates that many women need mentoring to help them learn about new technologies.[87]

The previously cited research undertaken for HRDC (October 2002) also reiterates that transition programs can and do help women overcome barriers in the labour market. Their assessment was that while transition programs may not always lead to immediate employment (and that the evaluation criteria should not focus on immediate results), they do play an important role in ensuring that women possess the basic skills required to participate in the labour force.[88] Such programs are particularly useful for women wanting to re-enter the labour force after an extended absence, for women on social assistance, and for other women facing barriers to more stable employment, as well as for some women seeking to gain confidence to enter trades and technological occupations.

Based on the evidence, establishing a province-wide infrastructure of different types of transition-to-employment programs for women, including more community-based options, offers a real solution to assisting women to move out of poverty. This lends credibility to the Nova Scotia Advisory Council's efforts to put longer-term transition-to-employment programs back on the table for funding.

Design Considerations of Transition-to-Employment Programs

Transition-to-employment programs specifically designed for women assist women to overcome personal, cultural, and/or systemic barriers to labour market participation and educational advancement. They generally provide a variety of approaches and include sequential components to integrate educational upgrading, counselling, life skills, mentoring, and skill training in an effort to help women determine their life goals, develop their skills, or find jobs.

The Women's Reference Group of the Canadian Labour Force Development Board also noted that specific groups of marginalized women such as aboriginal women and recent immigrants are particularly well served by transition programs, as the training can be tailored to meet their specific needs and challenges.[89] In the Nova Scotia context, the same points can probably be made about training programs for other groups of low-income or marginalized people, including women experiencing multiple barriers to employment.

One successful transition-to-employment model is BRIDGES, an employability program for abused women in Victoria, BC. In BRIDGES, all curriculum areas work together towards reinforcing a woman's self-perception as someone who can and wants to learn. The program is divided into two 15-week phases. The first phase consists of classroom teaching in communication, business and creative writing skills, computer skills, goal setting, career exploration and skill assessments, and workplace skills. The second phase includes job shadowing, resumé writing, and interview skills and one or more work experience components, providing on-the-job training in a woman's chosen career area.[90] A follow-up survey of 74 graduates in BRIDGES showed that while 68 per cent were working at the time of the survey, 69 per cent had gone into further training and education, and 81 per cent had participated in employment since graduation.[91]

Discussions with the head of the Disabled Persons Commission of Nova Scotia also indicate that transition programs can be particularly effective for disabled women. Given the reality that over half of income assistance recipients in Nova Scotia are persons with disabilities, there is clearly a need for employment programming developed specifically to meet the needs of women with disabilities. It should be noted, however, that little or no evaluation literature appears to exist on what kind of programs achieve the best results for these women.

The issue of whether women with disabilities and women from other visible marginalized groups do better in programs specifically designed and targeted to them or in programs that are more generally oriented towards women but designed to be inclusive of diversity (i.e., where the special needs of all women can also be addressed and taken into account) needs to be the subject of research and evaluation. While there may be a need for specific targeted programs for some groups of marginalized women, all training organizations should be encouraged to design programs that are socially and culturally inclusive.

One series of transitional projects recently delivered through several women's centres in Nova Scotia, according to one project coordinator, were specifically designed to be socially and culturally inclusive. The centres secured project-based funding to design and deliver training programs built on earlier models of pre-employment and re-entry programs. They

were aimed at preparing women to enter the workforce, pursue further education or training, or, using the train-the-trainer model for a literacy initiative, reach out to women in the community. The women's centres' own statistics show that over 75 per cent of women who have taken part in their pre-employment programming go on to further education or training or have successfully entered the workforce.

Bridging to Trades and Technology Programs

An HRDC report on gender equity (2002) makes the case that training women in areas with a shortage of qualified workers could help reverse the trend of women being trained for low-wage service and clerical employment. The report argues that "(t)here is little point in training women for occupations in which there is already a surplus, or which offer, at best, the prospect of low-paid employment, few opportunities for advancement, and a possible return to income support."[92]

Instead, the report argues, the focus should be on improving women's access to highly skilled occupations in high demand, and it recommends that transition-to-employment programming could focus on the trades and other technical fields. While admitting that the trades sector is not without its pitfalls, the report makes the case that with careful planning, preparation, committed partnerships, follow-through, and mentoring, trades training can be an appealing alternative for women interested in well-paid employment.

This idea is not new in Canada, and other literature supports this view. Marcia Braundy traces the history of the Women in Trades and Technology (WITT), a Canadian organization that in the 1980s and 1990s identified needs and developed effective programming to assist women "in gaining challenging, satisfying and economically sustainable employment in fields where they have been under-represented."[93]

Braundy notes that many of these programs were successful in encouraging women to enter the trades and technology occupations. One survey of graduates of women-only exploratory courses in trades and technology, for example, resulted in 63 per cent of the graduates in employment and another 13 per cent in technical training. Of those in employment, 47 per cent had found work in a trade or technical area. All indicated that the self-esteem and self-confidence gained from learning tool skills, as well as the personal and professional skill development, enabled them to pursue their current occupational choices.[94]

Influenced by WITT and its advocacy of increasing women's participation in trades and technologies, the Techsploration program in Nova Scotia focuses on introducing students in grade 9 to trades and technology occupations, encouraging girls in particular to participate. Some campuses of the Nova Scotia Community College continue to actively encourage women to enter their pre-employment programs in trades and technologies; however, there are few programs in existence today that are specifically designed for adult women.

It must also be recognized, therefore, that before women can take advantage of the higher wages offered by the trades and technologies, concentrated and sustained efforts are also required to both prepare and support women for entry into these occupations. Sustained efforts are also required to make the workplace culture more women-friendly.

One recent project demonstrated the need for such program efforts in Nova Scotia. The Equality in Technology Project, supported by HRDC and the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services and organized by the Women's CED Network and the Hypatia Project, worked in partnership with the NSCC Kingstec campus in the Annapolis Valley to support 20 women from diverse backgrounds to enter science and technology programs and to facilitate their transition into appropriate workplaces. Designed in part as a participatory research project, the project found that there are numerous barriers to women's recruitment and retention in trades and technology fields, some of which could be addressed through preparatory programs designed specifically for women.[54]

There are numerous good examples of such bridging or transition to trades and technology programs designed for women, both nationally and internationally. Some of these are discussed below. It should also be noted that many of these programs are also used in conjunction with the kind of re-entry or pre-employment programming designed specifically for women discussed in the previous section.

The European Union has supported successful trades training programs specifically for women for two decades. Established in 1983 to provide training in construction trades to disadvantaged women, Women's Education in Building (WEB) has become Europe's largest provider of women-only training in construction. In 2002, over 400 women successfully completed courses through the two WEB sites in London. WEB also acts as the delivery partner for a number of related initiatives, such as providing diversity training to college and training providers to improve recruitment and retention of women in construction; training for career advisors to support women in their career choices; training and training materials for employers; and mentoring for women already employed in the industry.[55]

The United States offers yet another successful example. Apprenticeship and Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) runs out of Seattle, Washington.[56] Launched in January 1981, ANEW is recognized as one of the top 20 training models in the United States. ANEW's 20-week program is targeted to single mothers almost exclusively.[57] The program trains for a family wage, which provides both motivation and incentive for participants. The curriculum consists of job skills for a full range of trades training—mechanical, electrical, and construction—and includes classes in physical strength building, jobs/life skills, and basic skills. ANEW also offers 40 hours of job search skills as well as placement, retention, follow-up tracking services, and ongoing counselling. ANEW programs have a 70 per cent successful placement rate on completion, and this increases slightly over time.

There are also a growing number of Canadian examples on which to draw where women learn how to take advantage of opportunities to train in non-traditional fields.

In Newfoundland, up to $1.7 million has been targeted towards increasing women's participation in the natural resources sector of the economy, a sector with good wages, high unionization rates, and reasonable long-term employment prospects. The effort is government supported but led by a community-based Women in Resource Development Committee (WRDC). The programs focus on the elimination of barriers that exclude or discourage women from seeking employment in the trades and technology sectors. The organization's mandate is to provide increased access to training for women, educate the

general public, and develop policies that promote the involvement of women in the natural resource and trades/technical industries.[99]

On the training side, WRDC developed and implements an Orientation to Trades and Technology (OTT) program. This program is designed to provide a safe and supportive environment for women to explore trades and technology training programs. It provides women with a fundamental understanding and on-the-job experience of natural resource–based industries and builds awareness that challenging, high-paying jobs in the natural resource industries are available and attainable for women. In addition to the industry basics, OTT also provides academic upgrading, hands-on skill development, occupational awareness, personal development training, and self-assessment instruction.

In co-operation with WITT, the Yukon Training Strategy established a special project on women and apprenticeship in 1998. In this project, 9 per cent of trades program seats at Yukon College were set aside for women. Saskatchewan has also set aside a designated number of seats for women in technical and industrial programs in its public educational institutions.

Community Economic Development (CED) Programs

The US, Canada, and countries in the EU are equally committed to moving as many people as possible from social assistance into work or a combination of both. The EU's employment-centred "activation" policy, however, is also linked to a broader strategy of social inclusion. This enables unemployed or under-employed people to take a more active part not only in the labour force but also in the broader community. The premise is that programming designed to enhance the quality of life—for example, through an expansion of affordable housing—can both build skills and provide employment.

In the UK, some of these activation projects involve voluntary or non-profit organizations (or what the British call "the third sector") in delivering training and in employing the participants. The WISE project operating through an umbrella organization known as the Wise Group Intermediate Labour Market in Glasgow, Scotland, offers an excellent example of how activation works. WISE combines training and employment services with a range of much-needed community projects. The philosophy is not to "make work" but to generate jobs that pay real wages and enhance the quality of life in communities. For example, WISE oversees a number of businesses that both provide employment and regenerate low-income housing through linked programs that recruit, train, and employ the long-term unemployed.[100]

HRDC and some Canadian social policy advocates have also identified CED as a means to build skills and include marginalized groups in the labour market. A recent HRDC report, *Gender Equity in the Labour Market: Lessons Learned*, advocates a CED approach as one strategy to advance women's employment possibilities in areas that are economically depressed such as the Atlantic region.[101]

The Caledon Institute has also advocated for leadership and investments in the social economy, community development, and community economic development as integral components of an overall employment development and social inclusion strategy. The

institute points to the potential of these approaches for creating local employment opportunities and generating income for persons with little or no financial security.[102]

Community-based organizations in Quebec, supported by government economic development policies, have already developed a viable "social economy," which plays "a major role in many spheres of economic and social life."[103] The social economy is used as a means to develop skills and employment through a variety of community-based enterprises. Based on the idea of activating social inclusion through projects that build social solidarity, Quebec's social economy model has been a means to support social development through the establishment of services such as child care, home care, and social housing.

The Quebec model is similar to some of the better community economic development (CED) approaches developed elsewhere in Canada and, closer to home, in Nova Scotia. The successes of the Antigonish Movement in developing livelihoods and other means of mutual support for the unemployed during the 1930s are relatively well known, but there are other more recent examples of enterprise development in Nova Scotia, based on economic or community development principles that involved low-income people.

Using a CED approach, the Human Resources Development Association/HRDA Enterprises Limited was established in Halifax during the late 1970s, and it continues to operate today. HRDA became known as one of North America's most innovative CED organizations. Designed to establish training, businesses, and jobs for long-term social assistance recipients, the organization supported more than 10,000 people in employment-related projects. Research on 10 Canadian CED initiatives in 1993 concluded that "the cumulative [net] benefit to government over the 15 years that HRDA has been in existence amounts to $7,068,900." In 1992 alone benefits exceeded costs by $1,476,786.[104]

More recently, there have been several similar, but smaller-scale projects in Nova Scotia. One project in the African–Nova Scotian community of Weymouth Falls has begun to enhance job skills through employment in the social economy. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is partnering with the local community on a project to rebuild housing stock and at the same time provide much-needed jobs and job skills to 12 unemployed community members. It is hoped that a third of the participants will go into the construction business for themselves, a third will be hired by other construction companies, while another third will enrol in trades training at the NSCC.

There are also signs that the social economy and community economic development are gaining more attention from the federal government. The 2004 federal budget promised to provide a modest increase in support for strategic planning and capacity building for community economic development organizations.[105]

CED Designed for Women

Though CED is often used in economically depressed areas, many mainstream approaches can be more focused on economic development than on social development. In addition, approaches may not be inclusive of low-income or marginalized people, especially women.

A CED approach specifically designed for women, however, can offer a focus and transitional programming that is of real benefit to women and the community. In the context of international development, for example, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has shown that gender-sensitive programming and activities that focus on women not only benefit women but can benefit the whole community and that these programs make sense from an economic efficiency perspective. CED for women also responds to the social and economic challenges women face through approaches that recognize that empowerment is often a key to achieving economic security.

Women in Canada have made an important contribution to CED in general, but there is also history of women's involvement in designing CED programs specifically designed for women.

In the early 1980s, WomenFutures was organized to promote women-centred CED programs for women in British Columbia. Women and Rural Economic Development (WRED) was organized in rural Ontario in the 1990s. Although this organization also fell victim to funding cuts in the late 1990s, WRED offered a range of services and programs. PARO, a Women's Community Loan Fund, however, continues to provide micro loans and operates a micro-business centre, training and educational programs, a community retail store, and a range of networking and marketing support services for women in northwestern Ontario. In addition, by providing financial support to women's groups for such things as self-employment training, feasibility studies, and worker co-operatives, the Canadian Women's Foundation has also supported women's economic development since 1991.

In Nova Scotia, the WEE Society/Women's CED Network is a CED organization with a focus on women. Through more than 20 CED projects, this organization has worked to foster a model of community economic development that works for women. Since the mid-1990s, the group has developed CED materials for women, as well as projects and training opportunities to advise and support more than 5,000 women and women's groups in their desire to develop businesses or other types of income-generating activity. More recently, women's centres in Nova Scotia have also begun to adopt a community economic development approach as a strategy to improve low-income women's economic security through their transition-to-employment programs.

Given that the Nova Scotia government has adopted community development as one of its priorities for 2004–2005, the further development of these or similar CED programs could be especially appropriate for women in rural Nova Scotia communities.

CED for women could also assist women who want to develop their entrepreneurial and business skills for co-operative enterprises, to become self-employed, or to start their own businesses. Although women are establishing new businesses twice as fast as men, they are still under-represented as business owners. According to ACOA, "women represent an under-utilized source of skills and knowledge, and have the potential to have significantly more impact on the Atlantic economy in the coming year."[108] ACOA argues, though, that women need better support to develop their business and entrepreneurial skills. Women's CED initiatives are a good entree for women to build their entrepreneurial skills.

Several other initiatives and approaches that encourage the development of self-employment or business development, such as the Learn$ave program (designed for low-income Canadians and sponsored by Metro United Way) and ACOA'S Women in Business Initiative (for women who have already started to develop their own businesses), could, in some circumstances, be useful complementary programs to community-based CED programming for women.

Summary of Key Points

- The literature shows that best practices do exist for helping people along a continuum from social assistance or reliance on low incomes to stable well-paid employment, but there is no "quick fix" to the problem of low-waged work. Almost all successful approaches require time (two to three years' minimum for many individuals) and a mix of interventions.

- It is generally accepted that childcare costs, health benefits, and transportation must be covered before single mothers can be expected to make the move from assistance to employment. Without these supports, no employment strategy will work. This means coverage for both the transitional period (up to two years) and at least the first year in a job.

- Job development and training programs that combine formal learning with skills development and on-the-job experience have been found effective in helping recent labour force entrants and re-entrants encountering employment difficulties to move into the mainstream economy.

- Job training programs have been less successful in assisting single parents on social assistance to move into stable employment that pays a living wage. In part, this is because programs did not adequately take into account the multiple barriers that single mothers face, such as access to affordable and reliable child care, affordable and reliable transportation, and health benefits. In part, it is also because women have usually been trained for jobs that do not pay a living family wage.

- Transition programs, common in the 1980s and early 1990s, typically assisted women to overcome educational, attitudinal, and structural barriers; determine and realize their job aspirations; and acquire the basic skills needed to participate in the labour force or to go on to further education or training. They were delivered by community-based non-profit organizations and by small private businesses.

- The literature shows that those transition programs that are woman-centred, socially and culturally inclusive, and delivered at the community level by community-based organizations may be more effective for assisting low-income women with multiple barriers to employment to move along a continuum towards more stable employment.

- These transition programs have been shown to be particularly effective for women with a background of abuse, women with disabilities, aboriginal women, women

from visible minorities, low-income women, and women wanting to re-enter the workforce after some time at home raising children.

- Training programs in areas suffering a shortage of qualified workers will help to reverse the trend of women trained in low-wage service and clerical employment. Bridging, or pre-employment, programs for women interested in exploring careers in the trades or technological occupations have proven to be effective.

- Before women can take advantage of higher-wage work offered by the trades and technologies, however, concentrated and sustained efforts are required to prepare and support women for entry into these occupations, as well as to change the workplace culture in Nova Scotia to make them women-friendly.

- The issue of whether women with disabilities and women from other marginalized groups do better in programs specifically targeted to them or in programs that are designed to be inclusive (i.e., where the special needs of all women can also be addressed and taken into account) should be the subject of research and evaluation. There may be a need for specific targeted programs for some groups, but all organizations providing training should be encouraged to design programs that are socially and culturally inclusive.

- Strengthening community economic development is also a viable strategy for creating jobs and moving low-income people into more stable, better-paid employment. A community-based approach to community economic development can assist in achieving the goal of social inclusion.

Strategies to Improve Living Standards

A review of the literature indicates that education and training help people, especially women, to move into more stable employment; but much of the literature now questions whether employment alone is the way out of poverty, especially for most single-parent families.[107]

There are several factors that make this unlikely: the volatility of the labour market, low wages in certain sectors of the economy, and the growth of precarious employment (i.e., the preponderance of casual, part-time, and short-term jobs). At the same time, full-time work often places extra burdens on women, especially low-income single parents who are already expected to do all the caregiving and fill other roles usually expected in two-parent families. All these factors work against the goal of self-sufficiency for single mothers.

Judith Maxwell (2002) suggests that the shift to various forms of non-standard and precarious employment is now a permanent feature of the Canadian labour market. Women will continue to remain on the periphery and at high risk of moving in and out of the labour market and the social assistance system unless better interventions and longer-term transition-to-employment programs, together with other supports such as child care, better transportation and medical benefits are developed.

Maxwell also argues, however, that there is a growing understanding in Canada that strategies to increase labour force participation will not, on their own, necessarily solve the problem of poverty or low incomes. As she points out, Canadian experience suggests that there must be better incentives to work, additional supports, and better integration of social assistance and employability programs if large numbers of individuals and families are not to continue to live in poverty.

As will be explained below, these insights have led some policy analysts to call on governments to find better avenues, through various kinds of income supplementation programs, to help working poor families earn a family wage.

Strategies to "Make Work Pay"

The literature in this area points to a number of viable options to improve living standards in both the short and the long term. These include wage supplements (alone or in combination with health- and childcare benefits and full-time employment); income packaging (a mix of social assistance including child care and other benefits and part-time work); and income supplementation through tax credits and child benefits (alone or in combination with other strategies). These various strategies are discussed below.

Earning Supplementation Schemes

One strategy designed "to make work pay" is the use of wage or earnings supplements. An example of this comes from Canada's Self-Sufficiency Project (SSP), an experimental program undertaken in British Columbia and New Brunswick between 1992 and 1995.

The SSP was an experimental income supplementation program targeted to single parents with children who had been on social assistance for one year or more, but who were able and willing to leave social assistance to participate in the program. Of the more than 9,000 volunteers who took part, about half were offered an income supplementation that provided a supplement to the family's earned income (of $3,000 to $7,000) for up to three years, provided they worked full time. Half were in a control group that did not receive the supplement. About two-thirds of all participants had a minimum of high school education, and half had attended a post-secondary institution.

The follow-up SSP evaluation study found that compared to the control group, there was a positive impact on the employment of participants over the short and medium terms. Over time (by year five), however, the differences in employment participation narrowed and became statistically insignificant as control group members also increased their employment. At the same time, however, higher earnings continued to be maintained for the participant group over the longer term (after year five).[108]

Some critics argue that because participation in such experimental programs is voluntary, participants are to a large extent self-selecting. In addition, external factors such as improvements in the economy are often not taken into account in assessing impacts. It is, therefore, possible that better results for both participants and non-participants (including those not in the controlled experiment at all) occurred because better conditions emerged in the labour market.[109]

Findings from a more limited evaluation involving only SSP program participants also indicated that over 70 per cent of SSP participants who received earnings supplements in the final month of the experimental program were still in full-time employment eight months after the supplement ended and only 1 in 10 had returned to welfare. Furthermore, interviews with participants found that "the supplement was paramount in helping them enter the workforce from welfare, purchase things they needed and wanted for their families, and increase their personal well being."[110]

The New Hope project in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, offers another example where wage supplements were used to increase the incomes of participants. In New Hope, participants who were employed 30 hours or more per week received an earnings supplement and had access to childcare assistance and health insurance if required. As well, they were allowed 10 hours a week of education or training with pay. The impact evaluation found that the project increased both employment and earnings and led to increased income during the first year of follow-up. Other benefits reported by participants included less stress, fewer worries, and less financial hardship.[111]

These two pilots provide evidence that earnings supplements (alone or in combination with health- and childcare benefits and full-time employment) can increase work effort and the incomes of those who are able and willing to work full time, as well as significantly affect family well-being and child outcomes.

Income Packaging and Social Assistance Programs

A related strategy known as "income packaging" offers families an alternative to choosing reliance on social assistance or the insecurities of low-wage work. Income packaging is a term used for a mix of part-time work with social assistance (including earning incentives built into the social assistance benefits system), as well as other benefits such as child care and transportation.

George Lemâitre's three-year study of long-term social assistance recipients in the British Columbia SSP experimental program provides support for this idea. The study showed that approximately one-third of the participant population left the system permanently within that period, but that 30 to 70 per cent had earnings from both employment and social assistance. "For many single parents," he writes, "the choice is not between full-time work and social assistance but between full-time work and a mix of social assistance and part-time work."[112]

In the context of system redesign, income packaging is now used by a number of provincial jurisdictions and forms part of the new approach to social assistance introduced in Nova Scotia in 2001. Programs of this kind, which allow social assistance recipients to continue to receive benefits while they maintain part-time employment, can facilitate a gradual transition to full-time employment for single parents and persons with disabilities as their circumstances change. Critics have pointed out, though, that some single parents are worse off under the new system than before and that the monetary work incentives are still too low.[113]

In a longitudinal study of low-income lone mothers, Kapsalis and Tourigny also argue for earnings supplementation and/or a more generous treatment of earnings under provincial social assistance programs to make paid work more attractive.[114] Human Resources Development Canada agrees. Its 2001 examination of welfare reform and labour market policies indicates that "increasing the allowable level of earned income, earned income tax credits and employment subsidies are successful bridging mechanisms to employment for social assistance recipients."[115]

Income Supplementation Schemes

Policies have also been adopted in Canada to supplement low incomes or reduce family poverty through non-refundable child tax credits and child benefits. All families with dependent children up to a certain income threshold receive a child tax credit. Canada first introduced a Working Income Supplement for working families with children in the early 1990s, but abandoned this to create the National Child Benefit in 1998. The National Child Benefit (NCB) has been enhanced twice since its inception.

Designed to address child poverty, to "take children off welfare," and to encourage labour market participation of single mothers on social assistance, the benefit was originally clawed back in full or in part in most provinces for families on social assistance. In some provinces, including Nova Scotia, the NCB has now been integrated with provincial child benefits to develop an enhanced benefit for both working poor families and families on social assistance.

In Nova Scotia, the enhanced integrated benefit enabled the provincial government to restructure social assistance so that single parents moving into employment could maintain their child benefit payments. At the same time they may receive allowances for transportation and child care, as well as retain a portion of their earnings. These changes, therefore, allowed more flexible "income packaging" arrangements as discussed in the previous section. Although they have benefited some women on social assistance, these changes have not benefited all.

Child benefits, non-refundable tax credits, and related schemes have been helpful, especially for the "working poor," but they do not address the underlying problem of low-waged work. Income supplementation programs that focus only on children do not deal with the vulnerability of parents to poverty or with the broader issues of the situation of parents and other adults on assistance.

The purpose of the National Child Benefit, for example, was to "take children off welfare," but by separating child poverty from family poverty, it does little for parents once their children are grown, and they are no longer eligible for child benefits. As Jane Jenson points out, at that point, "these adults may fall into deep poverty."[116]

Guaranteed annual income (GAI) and negative income tax (NIT) approaches take tax credits one step further by providing a "basic income" for everyone.[117] In Canada, a form of basic income for seniors already exists through Old Age Security and Guaranteed Income Supplement (OAS/GIS). This has been very successful in reducing the rate of poverty amongst seniors. A GAI was proposed during the Lalonde social security reform process in the early 1970s and again by the MacDonald commission in the early 1980s. Apart from some experimental programs in the 1970s, however, these ideas have never been acted upon.

Reconsideration of a GAI, however, has recently been proposed by the Caledon Institute, as well as other social policy think tanks. The approach is attractive, because it effectively takes individuals off welfare, is easier to administer, and offers an income floor for everyone. It can include work incentives because the GAI or NIT is only gradually reduced as income rises up to a certain threshold.[118]

Some critics point out, however, that, depending on the income threshold used, a GAI can act as a disincentive to achieving higher earnings and may also act to suppress wages in the labour market. In these circumstances, unless carefully designed with a high enough threshold, a GAI can help to maintain people in poverty.

Strategies to Transform Low-Paid Work

As Campaign 2000's *Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada* (2003) noted, one in four workers in Canada is in a low-paid job. This has remained unchanged, despite an economic boom.[119] Andrew Jackson (2003) has recently pointed out that strategies to transform low-paid work need to go beyond earnings or income supplementation schemes to include strategies focused on better income security programs and the development of human capital, as well as jobs that pay better wages and provide better working conditions.[120] This is the strategy favoured by some European countries.

In Canada, such a strategy would entail much larger investments in education and training than are made currently. Ideally, such a strategy would also include strengthening social policies, which would result in an income security alternative to welfare, higher minimum wages, better labour standards, and universal health benefits. For low- and moderate-income families with children it would also require a real commitment to accessible and affordable child care on the part of all levels of government.

Canadian policy think tanks such as the Caledon Institute, CPRN, the Canadian Counsel on Social Development (CCSD), and the Vanier Institute for the Family have put forward various ideas and proposals to strengthen Canada's income and social security programs so that we can begin to address urgent problems such as the growth of precarious employment and the income inequality and family poverty it fosters.

Now that the Canadian government has removed "health" from the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), organizations like the CCSD and the Caledon Institute are suggesting that it is time for Canadians and both levels of government to embark on a discussion about the future of Canada's other social programs.

Summary of Key Points

- Many jobs in today's labour market (estimated at one out of four) no longer provide a family wage. The shift towards various forms of non-standard and precarious employment is now a permanent feature of the Canadian labour market. Many of these jobs are filled by women.

- In order to ensure that women do not remain in poverty or on the periphery of the labour market, longer-term transition-to-employment programs and other interventions are required.

- Options for improving living standards in both the short and the long term include wage supplements (alone or in combination with health- and childcare benefits and full-time employment) and income packaging (a mix of social assistance including child care and other benefits and part-time work). Other options that go one step further include a guaranteed annual income and a negative income tax.

- Income packing is being used in Canada in combination with tax credits and child benefits.

- Europe has recognized that breaking through the low-wage barrier will take more than income supplementation measures. The European approach is to implement economic and social policy measures that ensure better-paying jobs and support families through tax-supported child care.

- Some strategies Canada could consider along this line include larger investments in education and training, higher minimum wages and better labour standards, income security alternatives to welfare, investments in health benefits such as Pharmacare, as well as a real commitment to child care. These strategies have already been proposed by several Canadian policy think tanks.

5. The Case for Community-Based Transitional Programs for Women in Nova Scotia

As outlined in Chapter 3, gender-based approaches in the adult education literature speak of how women returning to the workforce sometimes lack self-confidence, motivation, goals, and aspirations. The concentration of women in low-skilled, part-time employment can also serve to perpetuate and reinforce women's low expectations, resulting in a view of training as possibly irrelevant for them. This lack of self-assurance underlies the need for educational upgrading and training programs that aim to increase women's self-confidence and support them in developing a sense of direction and in career planning.

The evidence from the program evaluation literature and other research outlined in Chapter 3 indicates that for low-income people, and in particular women with multiple barriers, there is no "quick fix" to ensuring that a transition to employment also becomes a transition into stable, well-paid employment.

The evidence does show, however, that transition-to-employment programming can help women on their journey towards achieving this goal. It also shows that the programs that are most successful in assisting women with multiple barriers to access or make a transition to employment are built on woman-centred and adult education principles and that they integrate educational upgrading, counselling, and life skills with various types of skills training and on-the-job experience.

In addition, the most effective transition-to-employment programs are flexible and multi-dimensional and include various components of sequential learning and different points of entry. Successful programs include a mix of programming, similar to building blocks, that women can use to build their skills; they often involve a cohort of women who learn and grow together. Such programs are most effective when they are developed and delivered in the community by women's organizations, which can also provide mentoring and support.

The evidence also shows that these kinds of transition-to-employment programs are most appropriate for women with multiple barriers, for women making difficult transitions (such as into trades and technology training), or for women who have had a prolonged absence from the labour market. For women who identify a history of abuse or violence as a major barrier to employment, women-centred training is a prerequisite to regaining self-confidence and independence in the work world. In a Nova Scotia context, these programs could also be particularly relevant to low-income women and women living in isolated rural areas in Nova Scotia who might benefit from the interactions with other women facing similar barriers.

This chapter builds on this evidence to propose a strategy for developing a community-based infrastructure in Nova Scotia with the capacity to deliver transitional programs for low-income women. It argues that the knowledge and organizational basis for such an infrastructure already exists within women's organizations in the province. In the short term, this infrastructure and capacity deserve to be better supported. In the longer term, however,

they will need to be built and developed if the transition-to-employment interests of low-income women are to be served province-wide.

A Strategy for Establishing Community-Based Transitional Programs for Women in Nova Scotia

Plenty of off-the-shelf training manuals exist in almost all areas of training, but what is different about transition-to-employment programs for women is the supportive environment and the layered learning that occurs over the training period. Along with the "hard skill" content, women engage in self-esteem building. Women learn side by side with other women from both similar and diverse backgrounds; essential skills such as literacy and numeracy upgrading can be provided along with specific skills training; and the female staff are usually trained counsellors who understand the various barriers to education, career planning, readiness, and employment faced by low-income women.

Equally important, community-based organizations that provide this type of training usually offer ongoing support and mentoring to women once the training period is over. This follow-up support is a critical p ce for many women on their journey towards economic security.

Transitional programming is about making a difference in the lives of women who live in poverty. It must also be designed in a way that takes women's living situations into account. Rural women's needs, for example, may be different from those of women living in more urban settings. In isolated communities where childcare services are not widely available, it may be necessary to provide those services directly. Adequate transportation budgets for social assistant recipients are also required to enable rural women more dependable access to and from training and employment locations.

A Mix of Transitional Programming

Research for this report, supported by discussions with women's organizations, program managers in government, and others, suggests that in Nova Scotia four types of community-based transitional program options specifically designed for women would be of particular benefit to those experiencing multiple barriers to employment or for women preparing to make a transition to training in trades and technologies occupations. They are

- programs to support women involved in educational upgrading
- re-entry or "pre-employment" programs
- bridging programs to encourage and support women who are interested in careers in the trades and technology
- programs with a community economic development (CED) focus

These transitional programming types or options, more fully described in the section below, are compatible with the Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling and the Apprenticeship, Learning, and Earning priorities in the Skills and Learning

Framework and with the broader goals and aims outlined in Skills Nova Scotia. They are also in line with the federal government's vision outlined in *Knowledge Matters.*

Educational Upgrading

As discussed earlier, most experts on transition-to-employment programs now agree that access to education is an essential prerequisite if low-income people are to achieve economic independence through employment. Educational upgrading programs should also provide recognized certification that is transferable for credit in formal learning institutions.

As outlined earlier, the Nova Scotia Department of Education has made great strides in recent years in establishing an Adult High School in collaboration with school boards and an Adult Learning Program through the Nova Scotia Community College System. Some low-income women, however, still find it difficult to access educational upgrading through an Adult High School or a community college because of lack of confidence, distance, travel time, or affordable transportation.

In addition, the General Educational Development (GED) Certificate, which is not offered through the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) or the Adult High School, is often a preferable first step towards rebuilding self-confidence for women who may have left school at an early age. Accessible programs that provide women with help and support while preparing to write their GED tests are a critical requirement for low-income women.

Educational upgrading programs offered in the local community through women's centres or other community organizations would help to fill the gaps in the community college and Adult High School programs. It would also alleviate accessibility problems for those living in the more isolated regions of the province.

Besides the GED, the Adult Learning Program, and the Adult High School Diploma, other strategies that the Nova Scotia Department of Education could undertake in partnership with community-based organizations are to support women to pursue further post-secondary education through the establishment of post-secondary preparatory training. Mature women with grade 12 who may have been at home raising their children, but who want to pursue post-secondary education, may require some focused preparatory training to sharpen their math, writing, and study skills. Such training would also go a long way towards heightening self-confidence.

Pre-employment/Re-entry Programs

What all transitional re-entry or pre-employment programs for women have in common is a focus on providing women with the basic skills required to help them to identify and plan their long-term career goals and to make a transition to the labour force. Programs specifically designed for women usually vary in length from six months to three years, depending on the learning and employability needs of the target group, and they may also vary in content.

At a minimum, they typically provide counselling services, life-skills training, and basic skills in literacy, numeracy, and computer use with a focus on building self-esteem, assertiveness,

team building, and the ability to function successfully in a workplace setting. Combined with these basic skills are job-search skills and training in interview situations. Components are often flexible enough to tailor learning curricula to the needs of individual women. Work placements can also play an important role in transition programs as a means of boosting self-confidence and slowly introducing (or reintroducing) women to the workplace.

Several examples of transitional re-entry or pre-employment programs already exist in Nova Scotia. Women's Employment Outreach, a Halifax-based employment counselling project, is one of the few federally funded outreach projects still in existence in Nova Scotia. It provides transitional programming in information technology and one-on-one computer coaching to help ease these challenges and other anxieties relating to information technology.[121] The women's centres in the Northern Region of Nova Scotia have developed and are successfully implementing longer-term (18 weeks) re-entry/pre-employment transitional programs. Their model is tailored to individual women's educational levels and learning styles, supports problem solving, and builds upon women's skills. Each program includes components on literacy, labour force attachment, information technology, life skills, and health management. Mentoring is an additional and essential piece of the model. The model is also adaptable to a diversity of women and is appropriate for varying ages, cultures, and backgrounds.

Bridging Programs to Enter Trades and Technology Training

In Nova Scotia, women are extremely under-represented in apprenticeable trades. The Skills and Learning Framework, however, has identified the recruitment of under-represented groups, including women, as a priority. Marcia Braundy, an advocate of programs that provide women with an orientation to careers and entry-level requirements for trades or technology programs in Canada, argues that, "Bridging programs offer women at similar stages of learning, competing, and co-operating with each other, a healthy and productive atmosphere to grow in. Once a woman has achieved a general mastery, she is then ready to enter training and employment on a more equal footing." [122] The area of the trades and technology, therefore, could offer low-income women in Nova Scotia an opportunity for more stable and well-paid employment.

Bridging programs for women are often designed as a prerequisite for further training in an apprenticeable trade. Newfoundland and Labrador's Orientation to the Trades and Technology (OTT) program, discussed in Chapter 3, provides one excellent example of a community-based model for women interested in exploring trades and technology training programs. The program was to great extent developed in response to a review of women's training and equity on the Hibernia construction project. This review cautioned that to succeed in the recruitment of women in a construction setting, commitment to and support of equity principles must be in place from senior management and throughout the construction chain of contractors and sub-contractors.[123]

In light of the aging of the skilled labour force, and if women and other under-represented groups are to be attracted and retained in trades-related occupations, concentrated and more sustained efforts are required to change the culture of the workplace. Government, industry, and unions alike therefore need to identify and implement strategies to turn work sites into women-friendly work environments.

In Newfoundland and Labrador's OTT program, that commitment is generated through long-term relationship building, ongoing diversity training, and mentorship for women after placement. In addition to the industry basics, the OTT program provides academic upgrading, hands-on skill development, occupational awareness, personal development training, and self-assessment instruction. This model could be readily adapted for delivery through a Nova Scotia women's organization.

A recent Equality in Technology Project sponsored by Hypatia and the Women's CED Network in Nova Scotia offers one local model for programming designed to assist and support women interested in entering science and technology programs through the NSCC. Key elements of the model included an outreach worker to ensure that the women successfully completed the NSCC application and intake processes; to assist women to address barriers associated with accessing financial support for tuition fees, child care, and transportation; and to provide ongoing support, encouragement, and mentoring through links with other women already working in the fields of science and technology.

Transitional Programming and Community Economic Development

Using a slightly different approach, community economic development (CED), delivered through community-based organizations, could be another useful component in any transition-to-employment programming mix. A community-based, woman-centred approach to CED integrates economic development of employment with other social objectives of importance to low-income women, such as poverty reduction, social inclusion, rebuilding marginalized communities, workplace accommodation for persons with disabilities, and flexible schedules for workers with family responsibilities.

CED for women could include objectives such as business development, job creation, and skills-development components designed to meet women's specific interests and needs such as computer and Internet skills, business and co-op development, money management and access to credit, board development, office administration and bookkeeping, and project development.

Women for Economic Equality (WEE), an organization dedicated to promoting the economic well-being of women in Nova Scotia, has long held the view that CED programming is particularly appropriate for women who are marginalized through poverty. The organization also advocates for transitional programming in CED as a prerequisite for enhancing rural women's economic opportunities and argues that building organizational and leadership capacity is integral to successful CED initiatives for women. The WEE organization, through its Women's CED Network projects, has developed practical training in alternative forms of credit, access to basic economic literacy, and basic skills necessary for micro-enterprise including training in marketing, financial management, technical support, bookkeeping, inventory control, and managing employees.[124] It also recommends training in organizational and meeting skills, board and committee development, proposal writing, life skills, and organizational development.[125]

Building and Supporting Capacity

As outlined above, several women-led community organizations in Nova Scotia have the knowledge, the human capacity, and the organizational basis for the delivery of effective community-based transition-to-employment programming for women, using a variety of options. A strategy to develop a community-based transition-to-employment infrastructure for low-income women in Nova Scotia, therefore, could build on the capacity that currently exists within women's organizations in Nova Scotia.

As we have seen, this infrastructure is currently financially under-supported, somewhat fragile, and distributed unevenly within the province. However, it is not insignificant, and there is a great deal of potential for developing further capacity both geographically and by expanding program options.

This capacity could be developed further by encouraging creative partnerships between these organizations and other community-based or institutional organizations offering educational upgrading or skills-development programs. In addition, encouragement to build new relationships and partnerships with business, labour, and voluntary-sector organizations could enhance job experience or other components in these different types of programs. A few examples of how current capacity could be developed further are highlighted below. More detailed planning would be required at a provincial level to develop these ideas further.

In partnership with the Department of Community Services and funded through the Skills and Learning Framework, the women's centres in the Northern Region are already offering transitional programming through short-term project-based funding. Using their programs as a model, and with funding through Skills and Learning Framework partners, women's centres or similar women's organizations could deliver re-entry or pre-employment transitional options (including educational upgrading in rural areas where access to a community college might be difficult) in other areas of the province.

As outlined above, with a mission to promote the economic well-being of women and by facilitating programs and services that support women's full participation in community-based economic development (CED), the WEE Society through its Women's CED Network has the knowledge, experience and expertise to deliver CED skill development programs specifically designed for women.

The network's approach to the development of organizational skills could be used to encourage the development of co-operative enterprises, but these skills can also enable women to think about what is involved in starting a business and form the basis for women's self-employment. The Women's CED Network also has the expertise to provide ongoing mentoring for women and can help them identify and locate the kind of support they need to start or grow their own businesses, including linkages to ACOA's Women in Business Initiative.

The WEE organization also has experience and expertise in developing information technology skills for women; and as discussed above, in partnership with Hypatia, WEE recently delivered projects to support women's inclusion and participation in science and technology programs at the high school and community college levels.

In Nova Scotia, Techsploration delivers programs to high school students, but outside of the Equality in Technology project, the computer skills programs delivered through Women's Employment Outreach in Halifax, and the Ann Terry Project in Sydney discussed earlier, little community-based capacity exists for adult women in the area of mentoring, support, and orientation to careers and training in trades and technologies. Along with more proactive NSCC recruitment strategies, projects like the WEE/Hypatia Equality in Technology pilot could become an integral part of the NSCC curriculum, especially given the commitment of Skills Nova Scotia to increasing women's participation in apprenticeship training.

More attention, however, is required to assist the NSCC work-placement sites to become more supportive environments for women students, highlighting the chance of their recruitment and retention after graduation. One approach could be to develop further partnerships with existing community-based organizations such as WEE and Hypatia to assist NSCC in this area.

The six recommendations included in the Equality in Technology follow-up report, however, could be facilitated more directly through the delivery of pre-employment or bridging to trades and technology programs by a community-based organization with some experience, knowledge, and skills in the area, as has happened in some other provinces.[126] Such an initiative could also help to achieve the goals of the Skills Agenda and prove beneficial for women seeking careers in an area where women are still extremely under-represented.

Strengthening Support for Community-based Transitional Programming

Many efforts are currently being made at the community level by women's organizations dedicated to improving women's economic security to help them to achieve financial independence. An infrastructure of community-based women's organizations with the know-how and expertise to deliver programs currently exists, but its funding base is somewhat fragile, and more sustainable funding mechanisms are required if community-based transition-to-employment capacity is to be built and developed at the community level.

At the same time, both levels of government and all of the partners involved in the Skills and Learning Framework also have a responsibility to ensure that women in poverty—be they single mothers on income assistance, women with disabilities, women from marginalized communities, or low-income women ineligible for either social assistance or EI (the so-called "gap" clients)—can access the education and training they need to earn a living. But the limitations of policies based on divided jurisdictions and different departmental mandates, along with funding mechanisms and reporting requirements based on project funding, have made it difficult for both government and community partners to maintain momentum, build on past efforts, or develop organizational capacity.

The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework should offer better mechanisms for coordinating priorities and developing new funding arrangements. As we have seen, principles in support of training for low-income women are built explicitly into the framework, with strategic directions under the Employability priority speaking directly to the

establishment of strategies to enhance women's employment opportunities. The Skills and Learning Framework, therefore, provides a new opportunity to better support the somewhat fragile infrastructure of community-based transitional programming for women that currently exists across the province. But how can this new opportunity be realized?

First, although existing resources available under the Skills and Learning Framework are no doubt limited, the existing infrastructure for community-based transition-to-employment programs deserves to be better supported through more sustainable funding mechanisms.

One necessary step towards realizing this new opportunity would be for the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework to rethink their reliance on project-based funding. Each of the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework, therefore, should use the framework's coordinating and planning approach to develop funding mechanisms that would enable more secure multi-year funding so that community-based organizations can develop longer-term transitional programming and in some instances, province-wide programs.

At a minimum, new funding mechanisms should

- have the capacity to support an array of training approaches and options as outlined above
- recognize the need for longer-term transitional programming for women with multiple barriers to employment
- provide for multi-year funding so that the existing capacity of community-based organizations to deliver programs can be developed and supported
- include outcome measures and accountability processes more suitable for community-based organizations

The framework should also develop clear accountability processes, including expected outcomes, outcome measures, targets, and strategies, in line with the social inclusion goals and identified priorities/strategic directions in the framework.

More efforts should be made to ensure that community-based transition-to-employment programming capacity is built and developed so that a variety of programs can be made available to women throughout Nova Scotia but in order for the Skills and Learning Framework to make a real difference to women living in poverty, it may be necessary to identify low-income women as a specific priority in much the same way as youth have been identified as a priority, through a separate protocol agreement.

In the meantime a step towards moving in the right direction could be realized if all government partners in the framework were called upon to make firmer financial commitments to the framework's priorities. Each of the government partners involved in the framework, therefore, should include the framework's priorities in its own business plan, with community-based programming directed towards low-income women as a goal within existing priorities.

The Skills and Learning Framework provides for more coordination and planning, but as we noted earlier, there are several constraints on the ability of the framework, as it stands, to fulfil all of the goals outlined above. Besides the problem of reliance on project funding, these relate to limited financial resources and systemic issues. Despite the Employability, Career Development, and Counselling priority in the Skills and Learning Framework, there is no coherent Employability program, and there are constraints on the development of a system within which to design one.

These constraints are due in part to the limitations inherent in reliance on project-based funding; but they are also related to federal-provincial jurisdictional issues, the limitations of the EI legislation and the lack of alternative federal funding for skills development and training outside of Part II of the EI Act, the constraints of individual departmental mandates and, perhaps, too much reliance on decentralized decision making.

All of these factors, in different ways, mitigate against the development of a coherent province-wide skills and learning system or an Employability, Career Development, and Counselling program through which various transition-to-employment options could be funded and delivered. Resolving or working through these challenges, however, may be prerequisites for developing and building organizational and delivery capacity to serve the learning, skills-development, and transition-to-employment needs of low-income people, including women.

A more effective longer-term strategy to develop province-wide capacity to deliver institutional or community-based transition-to-employment programs for low-income people, therefore, probably means moving beyond the Skills and Learning Framework as it currently exists. It would likely involve changing the existing EI legislation and regulations, developing a renewed and strengthened LMDA with expanded partnership arrangements, focusing on social inclusion goals, and enhancing federal government financial support for skills development outside of its current limited obligations under Part II of the EI Act.

Summary of Key Points

- Transition programs for low-income women and women with multiple barriers to employment are most effective when they are developed and delivered by women's organizations.

- The most effective programs for women are flexible, multi-dimensional, have sequential learning components with multiple points of entry, and can require a long-term process. They include a mix of programming, similar to building blocks that women can use to upgrade their education and build their skills; they often involve a cohort of women who learn and grow together. Effective training also takes women's living conditions into account.

- Recommended transitional programming components for women in Nova Scotia include educational upgrading; pre-employment training; mentoring, support, and orientation to trades and technology training; and training in community economic development skills. These programming types fit the goals of the Nova Scotia Skills

Agenda and many of the approaches are already recommended under the Skills and Learning Framework.

- A basic, though fragile, community-based infrastructure for the delivery of transition-to-employment and CED programming for low-income women already exists in Nova Scotia. These programs and the organizational infrastructure to deliver these them deserve to be better supported through more sustainable funding.

  This infrastructure and capacity should be developed and built upon so that a variety of programs are available to women living throughout Nova Scotia.

- There is some organizational capacity to mentor and support women to participate in community college trades and technology programs, but if a full-fledged community-based orientation to trades and technology program is to be developed, it will be necessary to develop more capacity to deliver such a program at the community level. The Orientation to Trades and Technology Program in Newfoundland/Labrador offers a good model.

- The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework offers a better mechanism for coordination, planning, and support of community-based transitional programs than in the past, but improved funding mechanisms (including longer-term and program-based funding) with accountability reporting more appropriate for voluntary sector organizations need to be developed.

- All government partners in the framework should make firmer financial commitments to the Employability and Career Development Priority.

- The framework's business plan and the business plans of government partners in the framework should include accountability reporting for the framework's priorities and goals, including the goal of addressing the transition-to-employment needs of low-income women.

- If an infrastructure of community-based transitional programs is to be built and developed across the province, however, available funding under the Skills and Learning Framework needs to be further enhanced and an employability and career development program needs to be established. This will likely require new partnering arrangements under the LMDA and stronger financial support from the federal government.

6. Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to guide the development of a transition-to-employment strategy for low-income women in Nova Scotia.

Partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework

- That community-based transition-to-employment programs are recognized by both levels of government and all departmental partners involved in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework as an appropriate strategy for supporting low-income women in their move into employment.

- That giving due consideration to costs and the fiscal capacity of the province, the partners in the Skills and Learning Framework establish a task group to develop next steps for the development of transition-to-employment programs for low-income women in the Province of Nova Scotia, consistent with the findings of this report, namely that:

  - More stable funding mechanisms are required for community-based organizations currently delivering transitional programs; and funding should extend beyond the present 12-month timeframe so that program delivery may be more efficient and effective and offer a more diverse range of training for low-income women.

  - Transition to employment for women with multiple barriers to employment can be a long-term process and requires program flexibility to enable women to move from one stage of learning to another.

  - Transition-to-employment programs work best when they include various components and approaches specifically designed for low-income women and when they are flexible in design and content and can be tailored to individual needs.

  - Transition-to-employment programs in Nova Scotia should incorporate various components such as prior learning assessment and recognition, educational upgrading (including post-secondary readiness components), pre-employment programming, community economic development programming, and transition-to-trades-and-technology programming.

  - Prior learning mechanisms and processes should be recognized and developed so women can transfer within and between community-based learning and other transition-to-employment programs, and between these and the various programs offered through post-secondary institutions.

- Provision for appropriate support, especially child care, elder and disability care, and transportation costs, should be in place for the duration of all transition-to-employment training programs.

- The specific needs of rural women should be taken into account in relation to access to educational upgrading and other transition-to-employment programs, as well as their particular transportation and caregiving needs and costs.

- Existing community-based women's organizations with a successful record of delivering transition-to-employment programming to low-income women should be considered as a basis for the development of a community-based infrastructure to deliver transitional programs to women across the province.

The Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women

- That in collaboration with the various partners in the Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework and the Round Table for Women's Economic Security, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women continue to provide advice and support for the development and implementation of a strategy to develop community-based transition-to-employment programs for low-income women throughout the province.

Federal and Provincial Governments

- That the federal government review and revise the Employment Insurance Act and regulations to ensure that more women are eligible for benefits and programs.

- That the federal and Nova Scotia governments consider expanding their partnership arrangements under the Labour Market Development Agreement (LMDA) and the Skills and Learning Framework to allow greater flexibility for the development of a jointly funded Employability, Career Development, and Employment Counselling program in Nova Scotia so that these services can be developed province-wide and in a socially inclusive manner.

- That in the context of a renewed and strengthened LMDA, the federal government consider enhancing its financial support for skills development (outside of its obligations under Part II the EI Act) so that transition-to-employment programs can be expanded to people in poverty (including women) who are not currently eligible for, or in receipt of, social assistance or EI (sometimes referred to as "gap" clients).

- That both levels of government consider policies that would allow better access for low-income women, including women on social assistance, to post-secondary education.

- That both levels of government consider the need for stable, affordable, and accessible childcare services and focus on the enhancement of these services under the federal government's Early Childhood Development Initiative.

Governments, Business, Labour, Education, and Community Organizations

- That all levels of government, educational institutions, business and labour organizations, and community organizations recognize that everyone has a stake in assisting women to move towards economic independence and that they continue to work together to identify solutions to poverty. These should include ways to improve the quality of jobs in the labour market, better income security programs, accessible and affordable child care, workplace accommodation, improved supports for persons with disabilities, and better access to post-secondary education and continuing learning programs to assist people to participate in the labour market.

Endnotes

[1] Ronald Colman, *Social Determinants of Women's Health in Atlantic Canada*, vol. 1 of *Women's Health in Atlantic Canada. January 2003 Update* (Halifax: GPI Atlantic, 2003), 16.

[2] See Judith Maxwell, *Smart Social Policy—Making Work Pay* (Toronto: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2002), 4; and Jane Millar and Martin Evans (eds), *Lone Parents and Employment: International Comparisons of What Works* (Sheffield, UK: Department for Work and Pensions, 2003).

[3] Maxwell, *Smart Social Policy*, 4.

[4] Statistics Canada, *National Population Health Survey* (1996–97), 1997.

[5] Colman, *Women's Health in Atlantic Canada Update*, vol. 1, 3.

[6] Statistics Canada, *Labour Force Survey*, 2002

[7] Ron Saunders, *Defining Vulnerability in the Labour Market*, (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2003), 7–14

[8] Cynthia Cranford, Leah Vosko, and Nancy Zukewich, "Precarious Employment in the Canadian Labour Market: A Statistical Portrait," *Just Labour* 3 (Fall 2003): 6–22.

[9] Teresa Janz, *Executive Summary, Low-paid Employment and 'Moving Up', 1996–2001*. Income research paper series, catalogue no.75F0002MIE-No.003 (Ottawa: Statistics Canada, March 2004).

[10] Maxwell, *Smart Social Policy*, 7.

[11] Canadian Labour Congress, *Falling Unemployment Insurance Protection for Canada's Unemployed* (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Congress, 2003). See also CLC Communiqué, *EI Program Robs Workers, Especially Women* (Ottawa: CLC, September 3, 2003). The CLC argues that before the new legislation, there was virtually no difference in coverage between men and women. Today, only 45 per cent of these women are covered, compared to 58 per cent of men the same age.

[12] Shauna Butterwick, Anita Bonson, and Pamela Rogers, *Identifying Keys to Successful Transition from Social Assistance to Paid Work: Lessons Learned from Canada, the United States, Australia and Europe* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 1998), 14.

[13] Human Resources Development Canada, *Labour Market Brief*, September 2003.

[14] Colman, *Women's Health in Atlantic Canada*, 19.

[15]

Age Range (Years)	Number of Clients	Number of Children
16–29	3,515	5,411
30–44	4,527	8,232
45–54	875	1,202
55–65	122	142
Total	9,039	14,987

[16] Ken Battle and Sherri Torjman, *Social Policy That Works: An Agenda*, (Ottawa: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2002.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, "Education levels of single parent IA recipients by gender, select months" (data for December 2003).

[19] Sandra McFadyen, *Paid and Unpaid Work: Women in Nova Scotia, Part 5 of a Statistical Series* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2004), 22–23.

[20] Ibid., 18–19.

[21] Ibid., 13.

[22] Margaret Dechman, *What Do We Know about Mothers' Social Assistance Requirements?* Family Mosaic Project fact sheet, ([Halifax]: Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, [2001]).

[23] The former federal Department of Human Resources Development (HRDC) was split into two departments, the Department of Human Resources and Skills Development (HRSD) and the Department of Social Development (SDC) in January 2004.

[24] The Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework uses the Conference Board of Canada definition of employability, i.e., "the skills and attitudes that individuals need to enter, stay in, and progress in the world—whether they work on their own or as part of a team. They include, but are not limited to the following: fundamental skills (literacy, numeracy, science, technology, communication, problems solving); personal management skills (adaptability, positive attitudes and behaviours); teamwork skills."

[25] Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, "Education levels of single parent IA recipients."

[26] Sandra McFadyen, "Learners and Teachers: Women's Education and Training," *Women in Nova Scotia: Part 4 of a Statistical Series* (Halifax: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, 2002), 4.

[27] Stella Lord, The Development of the Employability Enhancement Initiative in Nova Scotia, 1987–1992, paper presented to the Canadian Sociology and Anthropology Association Annual Meeting, Humanities and Social Science Congress, Halifax, June 2003.

[28] In contrast to some other provinces, in Nova Scotia most of these projects were organized and delivered through private businesses, though some community-based organizations such as the YWCA delivered the most well-respected programs. See Lord, Development of the Employability Enhancement Initiative in Nova Scotia, 1987–1992.

[29] Stella Lord, *Labour Force Development Boards and Women's Access to Training in Nova Scotia* (Halifax: Canadian Congress for Learning Opportunities for Women, 1993).

[30] Under Part II of the 1996 Employment Insurance Act, access to long-term skills development programs is available only to those who are eligible for EI. According to the CLC there is a growing gender gap in EI eligibility. Short services (counselling, job search skills, and job placement services) are available to the unemployed who are not EI eligible. In 2001–2002 the latter accounted for over two-thirds of all interventions under HRDC's Employment Benefits and Support Measures program. A 2001–2002 Monitoring and Assessment Report notes that women were more likely than men to participate in short-term services "likely because fewer women participate in apprenticeship training programs." See Canada Employment Insurance Commission, *Employment Insurance 2002 Monitoring and Assessment Report* (March 2003), p. v.

[31] These bilateral F/P/T LMDAs were developed in the late 1990s as devolved or partnered approaches to delivering training programs and the new "active measures" under Part II of the Employment Insurance Act. In Nova Scotia the federal partners under the LMDA are Human Resources Development Canada (now Human Skills Development Canada), Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, Industry Canada, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Provincial partners are the Nova Scotia Departments of Education; Community Services; and Environment and Labour and the Office of Economic Development.

[32] Some of the issues related to low-income women's access to post-secondary education are explored in *Response to the Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture's Discussion Paper, "Student Assistance in the New Millennium"* ([Halifax]: Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women: April 1999).

[33] Canada Employment Insurance Commission, *Employment Insurance 2002 Monitoring and Assessment Report*, (Ottawa: Canada Employment Insurance Commission, 2003).

[34] CLC, *Falling Unemployment Insurance Protection*, 2003. The CLC argues that many workers who were covered under the previous unemployment insurance act, are no longer eligible for benefits. This is because the new criteria nearly doubled the number of hours worked for those newly entering the workforce or re-entering the workforce after a period of absence. Women, who make up the majority of workers in the non-standard workforce, appear to have been the main losers under the new EI legislation. Many of these women rely on part-time and seasonal work, such as the tourism and hospitality industry, which typically does not offer sufficient hours to qualify for employment insurance benefits.

[35] CEIC, *2002 Monitoring and Assessment Report*, v.

[36] Joan McFarland, "Public Policy and Women's Access to Training in New Brunswick," *Training the Excluded for Work* (Toronto: UBC Press, 2003), 193–212.

[37] ACTEW, *Access Diminished: A Report on Women's Training and Employment Services in Ontario*, (Toronto: ACTEW, Advocates for Community-based Training and Education for Women, 2000) <http://www.actew.org/about/training.html>.

[38] Quoted in McFarland, *Training the Excluded*, 2003.

[39] Ibid., 211.

[40] Katherine Scott, *Funding Matters: The Impact of Canada's New Funding Regime on Nonprofit and Voluntary Organizations* (Ottawa: Canadian Council on Social Development, 2003).

[41] ACTEW, *Access Diminished*, 10.

[42] Scott, *Funding Matters*, 5.

Trends noted by the CCSD include the following:

- The insecurity of funding undermines organizational stability and capacity to provide consistent quality programs, to plan ahead, and to retain experienced staff.
- Adherence to organizational "mission" is compromised by the need to qualify for narrowly prescribed program funding.
- The loss of core funding has forced organizations to narrow their focus to individual projects.
- The administrative demands for detailed reports driven by a greater need for accountability are proving too onerous for many smaller organizations run by volunteers.
- Organizational funding is often dependent upon other funding partners at the table; the loss of one could mean the loss of all.
- Organizations feel constrained to advocate openly for their client group for fear of upsetting partners and/or bringing on further funding cuts.
- Staff are burning out due to the increasing pressures of the new funding regime.

[43] Maureen Baker, "Social Assistance and the Employability of Mothers: Two Models from Cross-National Research" *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 21, no. 4, (1996): 496.

[44] Human Resources Development Canada, *Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market: Lessons Learned* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 2001), 17.

[45] For details go to <www.hrdis.ca/lmda>.

[46] Human Resources Development Canada, *Knowledge Matters: Skills and Learning for Canadians, Executive Summary*, Canada's Innovation Strategy. (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 2002), 2.

[47] Department of Finance Canada, *The Budget Plan 2004*, (Ottawa: Department of Finance Canada, 2002), 122–124.

[48] HRDC, *Knowledge Matters.*

[49] Finance Canada. *Budget Plan 2004*, 127.

[50] Canada–Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework (CNSSLF), *Frequently Asked Questions*, May 8, 2003.

[51] Canada/Nova Scotia Skills and Learning Framework. *Governance and Service Delivery Structure of Federal/Provincial Priorities for Joint Planning and Work, Policy Paper* (May 8, 2003)

[52] It is expected that these priorities will remain in place for fiscal 2004–2005.

[53] The remaining two priorities are Immigration and Labour Market Information.

[54] The Equity in Technology Project was carried out in partnership with the Hypatia Project, the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC), HRDC, and the Department of Community Services. It was implemented at Kingstec and the Annapolis Valley NSCC campuses and was designed to assist and support 20 women from diverse backgrounds to enter science and technology programs and to facilitate their transition to the workplace.

[55] Millar and Evans, *Lone Parents and Employment.*

[56] Rob Anderson, *Integrated Approaches to Active Welfare and Employment Policies*, (Dublin: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, n.d.), 1

[57] M. Waller, *Welfare, Working Families, and Reauthorization: Mayors' Views*, Survey Series, (Washington: Brookings Institution Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, 2003), 1–15.

[58] See, for example, HRDC *Lessons Learned: Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market.*

[59] Canada. *Lessons Learned: Literature Review on Employment, Labour Market and Economic Development Policies, Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples.* Technical Report prepared for Evaluation and Data Development Strategic Policy (Human Resources Development Canada, May 1998), 17–22 <http://www11.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/pls/edd/SP141T.lhtml>.

[60] While a positive first step towards supporting women in their transition to employment, flexibility is required to take into account the realities of women living in the more rural areas of the Nova Scotia. For example $150 may not be sufficient to cover the transportation costs of women living in Guysborough County who need to travel daily to the NSCC at the Strait; similarly, extra childcare seats are required throughout the province to better support the employment aspirations of women with young children.

[61] McFadyen, *Paid and Unpaid Work*, 41.

[62] Costa Kapsalis and Pierre Tourigny, *Profiles and Transitions of Groups at Risk of Social Exclusion: Lone Parents*, <http: //www.drhc-hrdc.gc.ca/sp-ps/arb-dgra/publications/research/2002do>, (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada),19–22.

[63] Lisa Lynch, "Do Investments in Education and Training make a Difference?" *Policy Options* 18, no. 6 (July–August 1997): 31–39.

[64] See HRDC Lessons Learned Series, specifically *Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market* (2001) and *Literature Review on Employment, Labour Market and Economic Development Policies and Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples* (1998).

[65] HRDC, *Lessons Learned: Literature Review on Employment, Labour Market and Economic Development Policies, Program and Services for Aboriginal Peoples*, op.cit., 22

[66] Margaret Dechman, *Educational Profiles of Mothers: A Longitudinal Study of Lone Parent and Two-Parent Families*, The Family Mosaic, (Halifax: Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, 2000), 22–23.

[67] Ibid.

[68] http: //www.familyhomelessness.org/policy/policy.html

[69] These seats are available through the province's *Educate to Work Program*. Discussions with Community Services staff at Head Office.

[70] Statistics Canada, *Earnings of Canadians*, 97F0019XCB01002.

[71] Statistical results extracted from the Nova Scotia Community College, 2003 Graduate Follow-Up Survey by Anna Burke, Institutional Research Analyst, February 2, 2004

[72] Women's CED Network, *The Digital Divide*, n.d.

[73] Abt Associates of Canada, *Evaluation of the Job Entry Program* (Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada, July 1989), vii.

[74] The Re-entry Program was one component of the Job Entry Program and was first implemented in 1985. The Re-entry Program was targeted to women who had faced barriers to full-time employment or who wished to return to the labour market after a period of absence.

[75] Abt Associates of Canada, *Evaluation of the Job Entry Program* (Ottawa: Employment and Immigration Canada, July 1989), 32–34.

[76] HRDC, *Nova Scotia Compass: A Summative Evaluation, Final Report*, August 1997

[77] Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, Strategic Planning and Policy Division, *Evaluation of the Nova Scotia Agreement to Enhance the Employability of Social Assistance Recipients, Phase III*, December, 1995

[78] See HRDC Lessons Learned Series, especially *Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market* (2001) and *Literature Review on Employment, Labour Market and Economic Development Policies, Programs and Services for Aboriginal Peoples* (1998).

[79] Essential skills are discussed in Chapter 1. They include reading text, working with others, thinking skills, continuous learning, writing, oral communication, document use, numeracy (math), and computer use.

[80] Margaret Dechman, *What Do We Know about Mothers' Social Assistance Requirements?* The Family Mosaic Project, Nova Scotia Department of Community Services.

[81] Jane Millar, "Employment Policies for Lone Parents" in Millar and Evans, *Lone Parents and Employment*, 1–6.

[82] See NBACSW *Women and Training: Volume 2, Women's Participation in Training*, pp. 46–48 for a discussion of this report.

[83] Ingrid Wellmeier, *Women Making Transitions: Research Report* 1, (Ottawa: Canadian Labour Force Development Board, 1994), 39.

[84] Aisla Thomson, Executive Director of the CCLOW in 1994 stated that "women need positive, supportive, safe, and women-centred programming and environments in which to develop their full potential."

[85] Marcia Braundy, "Building Foundations for Technical Training: WITT Standards and Guidelines," *Women's Education des femmes*, vol.10, no. 3/4, (1993/94): 52.

[86] See for example D. MacKeracher, "Women as Learners," *The Craft of Teaching Adults* (Toronto: Culture Concepts, 1993).

[87] ACTEW, *Access Diminished*, 13. They use the term "computer terror" to characterize a challenge shared by many women seeking to enter or re-enter the job market.

[88] "Gender Equality in the Labour Market," 10.

[89] Wellmeier, *Women Making Transitions: Research Report* 1, 38.

[90] See description of programs for Bridges for Women Society, <http://www.bridgesforwomen.ca>.

[91] Joan Krisch and Arlene Wells, "BRIDGES: An Employability Program for Abused Women," *Women's Education des femmes*, Vol. 10, No. 1, winter (1992/93): 25–26.

[92] *Gender Equality in the Labour Market: Lessons Learned* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, October 2002), 10 <http://hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/edd/>.

[93] WITT was also a victim of funding cuts in the mid-1990s.

[94] Cited in "Building Foundations for Technical Training: WITT Standards and Guidelines," *Women's Education des femmes* Vol. 10 no. 3/4 (winter 1993/94).

[95] The Women's CED Network, *The Digital Divide: A Framework for Action*, n.d.

[96] For a more detailed discussion on Women's Education in Building, go to <http://www.bww.org.uk/support.htm>.

[97] Butterwick, Bonson, and Rogers, *Identifying Keys*, 43–44.

[98] Sixty per cent receive social assistance and 85 per cent are either high school dropouts or at a GED level; 57 per cent are between the ages of 22 and 29; 37 per cent are between 30 and 39.

[99] For more information, see http://www.wndc.nf.ca

[100] Nikolas Theodore and Jamie Peck, "Welfare-to-Work: National Problems, Local Solutions?" *Critical Social Policy* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 500–502.

[101] *Gender Equality in the Labour Market: Lessons Learned*.

[102] "Social Programs: Reconstruction Not Restoration," 16.

[103] Yves Vaillancourt, Francois Aubry, Louise Tremblay and Muriel Kearney, "Social Policy as a Determinant of Health and Well-Being: Lessons from Quebec on the Contribution of the Social Economy" (University of Regina: Social Policy Research United, September 2003)

[104] Stewart E. Perry and Mike Lewis, *Reinventing the Local Economy: What 10 Canadian Initiatives Can Teach Us About Building Creative, Inclusive and Sustainable Communities* (Vernon, BC: Centre for Community Enterprise, 1994).

[105] Canada. *The Budget Plan 2004*, 179.

[106] ACOA, Fact Sheet: Women in Business Initiatives, September 20, 2002

[107] See *Honouring Our Promises: Meeting the Challenge to End Child and Family Poverty, 2003 Report Card on Child Poverty in Canada*, Campaign 2000.

[108] SDRC, "Can Work Incentives Pay for Themselves? Final Report on the Self-Sufficiency Project for Welfare Applicants," October 2003.

[109] In the context of a more buoyant economy in the last few years, this point may be borne out by a recent Statistics Canada report that assessed the longer-term results of the SSP program. It noted that although the impacts of the SSP program on full-time employment continued for over four years, "after 54 months … the short-run impacts had almost completely been eliminated" and there were few differences between participants and the control group. See Marc Frenette and Garnett Picot, "Life after Welfare: The Economic Well Being of Welfare Leavers in Canada during the 1990s," Statistics Canada, March 26, 2003.

[110] *Learning What Works: Evidence from SRDC's Social Experiments and Research* Vol. 3, No. 1, (Winter 2003): 4–6 <http://www.srdc.org>.

[111] *New Hope for People with Low Incomes: Two-Year Results of a Program to Reduce Poverty and Reform Welfare* (April 1999) <http://www.mdrc.org/Reports>. Participants' children were reported to have better educational outcomes, higher occupational and educational expectations, and more social competence; and boys showed fewer behavioural problems in the classroom.

[112] Georges Lemaître, *Single Parents on Social Assistance: A Longitudinal Analysis* (Hull: Human Resources Development Canada, 1993), 33

[113] *Impact! The Effect of Nova Scotia's New Income Assistance System on People Who Need Assistance*, (Halifax: Community Advocates Network in partnership with the Nova Scotia Association of Social Workers, November 2003).

[114] Kapsalis and Tourigny, *Low Parents*, 19–22.

[115] *Reconnecting Social Assistance Recipients to the Labour Market: Lessons Learned* (Ottawa; Human Resources Development Canada, 2001), 3.

[116] Jane Jenson, *Redesigning the Welfare Mix for Families: Policy Challenges* (Ottawa: Canadian Policy Research Networks, 2003), 6.

[117] Negative income taxes provide people with a guaranteed minimum income and income subsidies for people on low incomes—up until a break-even point—when normal income taxation kicks in. NITs essentially are welfare benefits that are delivered through the income tax system, but without the means test and all the bureaucracy.

[118] Ken Battle, Sherri Torjman, and Michael Mendelson, *Social Programs: Reconstruction Not Restoration. Brief to the Standing Committee on Finance* (Ottawa: Caledon Institute of Social Policy, 2000).

[119] Campaign 2000, *Report Card*, op. cit., 4

[12] Andrew Jackson, *'Good Jobs in Good Workplaces': Reflections on Medium-Term Labour Market Challenges*, Research Paper #21, Canadian Labour Congress, March 2nd, 2003.

[13] WEO runs 10 IT workshops a year for eight women (10 x 8 = 80). There are waiting lists for every workshop.

[14] Marcia Brunday, *Out of the Stream and Into the River* (Ottawa: Canadian Vocational Association Occasional Paper, no.4, n.d.), 20.

[15] The review states: "This requires there be a clear, formal and unambiguous communication of the commitment to equity, specific implementation requirements, a regular monitoring of performance, clear sanctions in the case of nonperformance, and a willingness to implement these sanctions."

[16] Women's CED Network, *Rural Women Get Credit Consultation Report* (Hubbards, NS, August 2002), 20–21. These needs were identified through a survey of some 250 rural women in Nova Scotia who own a small, micro or home-based business or who expressed a strong interest in owning their own business.

[17] Women for Economic Equality Committee, *Counting Women In Community Economic Development* (Hubbards, NS: September 1997).

[18] *The Digital Divide*, *op.cit.*